

# FOUR MARTYRS OF TONKIN

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THE HISTORY OF THE MARTYRDOM OF  
THE FOUR MARTYRS OF TONKIN

BY THE REV. J. H. W. L. DE VRIES, S. J.

TRANSLATED BY THE REV. J. H. W. L. DE VRIES, S. J.

WITH A PREFACE BY THE REV. J. H. W. L. DE VRIES, S. J.

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LIVES  
OF FOUR MARTYRS OF TONKIN

WHO BELONGED TO THE DOMINICAN PROVINCE  
OF THE HOLY ROSARY

IN THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

BEATIFIED THE 20th OF MAY, 1906

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By REV. M. B. COTHONAY, O.P.

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P. J. KENEDY & SONS  
NEW YORK

## APPROBATION OF THE ORDER

We have read the work entitled *Lives of Four Missionaries of the Friars Preachers Martyred at Tonkin in the XVIII Century, Beatified the 20th of May, 1906*, written by Father M. B. Cothonay of the Friars Preachers, and we have judged it worthy to be printed.

Rome, 20th of October, 1908.

Fr. Leonard Lehu of the Friars Preachers,  
Provincial of Holy Land.

Fr. Barnabé Augier of the Friars Preachers,  
Master of S. Theology.

Imprimatur

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Master of S. Theology,

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Nihil Obstat.

Remigius Lafort, S.T.L.,

Censor.

Imprimatur.

John M. Farley, D.D.,

Archbishop of New York.

July 13, 1911.

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## PREFACE

The four Martyrs of whom we have written the history were all Dominican religious. Three of them Spaniards and one a Tonkinese. All four were martyred at Hanoi, the capital of Tonkin, outside the territory of their mission, the first two on the 22nd of January, 1745, and the other two the 7th of November, 1773.

The Dominican mission of Tonkin divided to-day into three Vicariates Apostolic, formed at that time but one only, under the name of the Vicariate Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin. Its territory extended between the Red River, the Clear River and China. This territory, however, was not exclusively reserved to the Dominicans, as it is at the present day—Jesuits, Augustinians, and Carmelites had missions in various parts.

Tonkin in the XVIII century had kings who did not govern. The family Trinh had seized the power, and one of its members really exercised it under the name of *Chúa* or Lord. This word "Chúa" has no exact equivalent in our tongue. Real kings to whom the name alone was wanting, the Annamite "Chúa," had a family likeness to the mayors of the palace of the Merovingian epochs in France. Japan at that time was similarly governed. Such was the political situation in the middle of the

XVIII century. The “Chúa” or kings of Tonkin, as we shall often call them, since they possessed its real authority—these kings, contemporaries of our martyrs, whom they condemned to death, were in the first place corrupt men, leading the licentious life of the Oriental princes. They were surrounded by eunuchs and perverse mandarins, who exercised upon them an unfortunate influence. They had the mental views and prejudices of their race, heartily detesting all that came from outside; the Christian doctrine they hated instinctively, because it condemned their licentious inclinations; moreover, during this period which extends from the year 1737, in which the first of our four martyrs was arrested, to 1773, the year when the last two were put to death, the “Chúa” or kings of Tonkin had to repress several insurrections which came near depriving them of their usurped power. Frightful calamities desolated the country: disastrous inundations, prolonged droughts which caused the loss of several crops, and brought in frightful famines, pestilence, cholera, small-pox, etc. The mandarins excited by the calumnies of the bonzes, represented the Christians and missionaries to the King as the cause of all these evils. All this was more than sufficient to bring these weak and naturally cruel princes to commit the greatest injustices and even to shed the blood of the ministers of God.

The religion prohibited in Tonkin and for the defense of which our martyrs died, was called in the decrees of proscription, the religion of the "Hoalang." Who was this "Hoalang"? Neither more nor less than a Portuguese merchant, others say a Hollander, whose stuffs bore embroidered in the weave the flower (hoa) of the sweet potato, Khoai lang; whence the name given to the cloth itself and soon to him who trafficked with it. This merchant professed the Christian religion; the pagans not looking closely into these matters, had not been slow to designate all Christians, even those of their country by the name of followers of the religion of "Hoalang."

This name soon produced an equivocation, of which, at times, the Christians profited, with, or without the connivance of the mandarins. When one of the faithful appeared before the tribunals the mandarins asked him:—"Do you profess the religion of "Hoalang?" The answer was invariably the same: "I profess the religion of the Master of Heaven." This is the name by which the Annamites designate the Christian religion even to this day.

Thanks to this confusion, for which they could not be held responsible, a great number of the accused secured liberty and safety, while at the same time, openly confessing the God whom they were reproached with serving.



As for the topography of Tonkin at the epoch of our martyrs, especially in the Delta, it presented a notable difference from what we see to-day. It has probably gained since then, more than two miles on the sea, all along its shore, by the addition of alluvial soil. There were then, no European dwellings or monuments. The roads were only winding paths through the rice plantations. Private persons were forbidden to roof their houses with anything but grass or weeds, tiles were reserved for the pagodas or dwellings of the kings and the mandarins.

The Annamite people whom our martyrs evangelized date from a remote antiquity. They are probably a mixture of Malay arrived by the sea, of Mongolians come down from the center of Asia by the great rivers, and of tribes started from India. Their religion is a worship of genii or demons whom they honor, and to whom they offer sacrifices mainly for fear. They believe that by gifts and certain rites they may render them favorable and prevent them from injuring them. Buddhism is a superfetation added to this primitive worship, it is very imperfectly known and practiced by the people who have attached themselves, principally, to numberless superstitions. The learned are generally skeptic, and after the example of the Chinese of this class, they perform certain ceremonies in honor of Confucius.

The greatest obstacle to the conversion of the



Annamites of the eighteenth century, as well as in our own day, is the worship of ancestors. It seems to them that by embracing Christianity they fail in filial piety. They need time and the grace of God to understand that in the Christian religion they can honor their ancestors as well, and even better than in their own religion. Moreover, they regard with distrust and repugnance, everything that comes from the stranger, while for many, the Christian religion is regarded as an enemy, because it condemns the base instincts of human nature. "Ah, your religion is beautiful, one of their literati remarked to us, we admire it very much; we would willingly embrace it, but . . . it is the sixth and seventh commandments that embarrass us." . . . I remembered then the reply made by one of my confrères to another of these men who had made the same avowal. "Wretch," he said to him, "it is the fifth commandment that troubles *me* now," showing him his strong hand which like a vise might have so easily broken the frail neck of the pagan.

In these biographies we will often have to speak of Annamite prisons. It is difficult to form an idea of what our martyrs had to endure. In the first place, these prisons were damp and cold in the winter; in the summer one suffocated in them in the midst of sand and vermin. Generally they were large wooden barracks or huts, which the prisoners

would not have had much difficulty in overturning had they leagued together, hence to avoid this they were almost always loaded with the cangue and in chains, at night especially they were shackled, all which things rendered sleep nearly impossible.

On principle, the prisoner had to provide his own nourishment; he was given nothing but a famine ration, if he had no relatives to look after him.

Our missionaries were choice prisoners for the jailers who, believing them to be rich, took every advantage of the Christians and extorted from them in the boldest manner, all the money they could. For the mandarins of the prisons, and their satellites as well as for the jailers, it was an inexhaustible mine. The missionary had to pay to be relieved of his cangue and his chain, to pay that he might not be put in fetters, as the Christians had to pay if they visited him, if clothing or if food were brought to him. It was necessary to pay if they wanted to go out an instant to breathe the air. They had to offer money for everything, even to be allowed to write a letter.

The biographies which follow were composed with the aid of the Apostolic Processes and the letters of the martyrs. For the life of Bl. Francis Gil de Federich, we drew very freely from the book of Father Semper; for that of Father Alonso Liciniana from that of Father D. Garcia; for that

of Bl. Hyacinth Castagnéda from that of Father J. Burtrago; finally for that of Bl. Vincent Liêm of Peace from that of Father M. Andres. To these authors, all of the Order of Friars Preachers, we tender the expression of our lively and fraternal gratitude.



## NOTE

We have preserved the orthography of the Annamite names according to the alphabet adopted by the first missionaries of Tonkin and still in use. The lector who would have an approximate idea of those names should almost always pronounce the *u* as in the word *put*; sometimes, however, it is pronounced as in the word *but*. The *h* which is found so often after the *n* gives the sound of the last syllable of the word *putting*. *Ch* is pronounced as the last part of *which*; *x* as *sh*; *kh* represents a guttural sound which does not exist in English; it is nearly the Spanish *jota*. In the beginning of words *h* is always hard as in this word *hard*.



# Martyrs of Tonkin

## CHAPTER I

### HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE KINGDOM OF TONKIN

1. Its primitive history. 2. The dynasties "Le" and "Mac." 3. The Kingdom of Cochinchina. 4. The Empire of Annam. 5. Gia-long and Minh-Manh.

1.—Tonkin, where these glorious Martyrs shed their blood for the faith of Jesus Christ from the year 1838 to 1840, is situated to the south of China. It has been under the protection of France since 1884 and forms part of French Indo-China.

The inhabitants, the Tonkinese, take their name from the country of Tonkin a rather recent name, but they are also called *Annamites*, either because they descend from the same race as the population of Annam, or because Tonkin has for many centuries formed part of the empire of Annam. This empire was formerly composed of Cochinchina, Tonkin, and Annam, but it is actually reduced to the latter two countries. The emperor reigns at Hué, the capital of Annam under the protection of France, but he has scarcely more than a nominal authority.

The history of Tonkin is chiefly known from the Annals of China. Like the latter country it has

always been the seat of innumerable revolutions, sometimes subject to China, sometimes independent under the government of native princes. During the third century before our era, the "Giao-Chi" occupied a great part of the country. A strange peculiarity has saved them from oblivion. They had the large toe remarkably separated from the second, forming nearly an angle with it, and it is by no means rare at the present time to find traces of this singularity amongst the natives of Tonkin.

Tonkin was conquered by China about the beginning of our era and remained under its dominion until about the middle of the tenth century, it was then governed by viceroys. From 968 to the beginning of the fifteenth century Tonkin was successively under the rule of three dynasties of native Princes, it then fell again into the power of China, but only for a short time. "Soi" one of the last of the race of the "Le" placed himself at the head of the Nationalists, a terrible struggle ensued which lasted ten years and is said to have cost the lives of 300,000 Chinese; he succeeded in ensuring a certain independence to his country; the Emperor of China having consented to peace, on conditions that "Soi" and his descendants should pay a tribute of fruit and other products of the country.

2.—In 1523, King "Coung-Hoan" was dethroned by his son-in-law "Le-Du." Of low extrac-



tion, he had gained the rank of general by the fortunes of war. The king honored him by his confidence and gave him his daughter in marriage. He acknowledged the generosity of his master by stealing his throne. He founded the dynasty of the "*Macs*" and the foul means by which he had gained the throne were soon forgotten, because of the ability and wisdom with which he ruled.

His son and heir was far from possessing the qualities of his father. His crimes were so revolting that the partisans of the "*Le*" family succeeded in placing one of their dynasty on the throne. The "*Macs*" however continued during many years to govern the little kingdom of "Cao-Bang" in the mountains north of Tonkin.

The line of "*Le*" reigned in Tonkin until nearly the end of the xviii century but their authority was little more than nominal. Their kings remind us of the Merovingiens. The real rulers were members of the family of Trinh who under the title of "Chua" or Lord, occupied the position of Major-domo.

3.—In the xvi century, the political exiles of Tonkin and Annam, men daring and bold, declared their independence and under the orders of the family Nguyen founded the "Kingdom of Cochin-china" including under that name, Camboge and East Annam. The kings of Tonkin instead of declaring war, preferred an agreement by which they

acknowledged their independence reserving for themselves pro forma a nominal sovereignty.

4.—Towards the end of the XVIII century the mountaineers of the western part of Tonkin revolted, and under the name of "*Tay-Son*" made war both on the *Le* and the *Nguyen*. The last of the Trinh or major-domos of the palace committed suicide and the last of the "*Le*" family escaped to China, and has never since been heard of. Nguyen Ant, son of the last king of Cochinchina was forced to hide in the mountains where he was often on the point of starvation. The Papal Vicar Apostolic of Cochinchina Mgr. Pigneau de Behaine gave him all the aid he possibly could; he even went to the Court of Louis xvi with his little son to beg men and money to reestablish the king of Cochinchina on his throne.

5.—Thanks to this protection Nguyen-Ant succeeded in expelling the *Tay-Son* and in seizing not only his own kingdom but that of Tonkin. He took the name of "*Gia-Long*" and was proclaimed emperor of Annam. Until the end of his reign he remained grateful to Mgr. Pigneau and to the Church for all they had done for him.

He died in 1820 and "*Minh-Manh*" one of his sons succeeded to the throne.

It is said that "*Gia-Long*" on his death bed charged his son to continue his politics and to help the missionaries, without the help of whom he would

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never have been on the throne. "Minh-Manh" knew that very well, but gratitude was a heavy burden for him. Indifferent in the beginning, he became hostile, and in the last years of his reign was one of the most ferocious persecutors of the Christians. His name is inscribed in letters of blood with those of Nero and Diocletian in the Annals of the Church.

## CHAPTER II

### THE POPULATION OF TONKIN

1. The different races inhabiting Tonkin. 2. The Annamites. Their characteristics, physical, moral and intellectual. 3. The French. 4. The Chinese. 5. The Savages.

1.—Four principal races inhabit Tonkin. The Annamites, the French, the Chinese and the Savages.

There are at least ten or twelve millions of Annamites in Tonkin and probably more. Physically the Annamite is shorter and more slender than the European, he is even smaller than the Chinaman. He is more or less tanned according to his habitation being South or North, or that he is accustomed to work in the sun or in the shade.

He has black hair, and a little beard: his eyes are black and round and differ from those of the Chinese which are turned up: his nose is flat and the upper lip thicker than the lower, his teeth are painted black and he has the cheek bone prominent. The Annamite without being down right ugly does certainly not represent one of the finest types of the human family.

2.—The Annamite is intelligent and sharp, he possesses a wonderful memory, above all, during

childhood, and youth, but after the age of 25 or 30 he is seldom capable of any great intellectual effort.

He has remarkable moral qualities: he is gentle and obedient, hospitable and industrious: the love of the family is strongly developed: unnatural parents like those of China who strangle the new born girl because she is too great an expense to the family are unknown here. The children are very respectful towards their parents, a respect which grows into superstition after their death, since they offer them sacrifices with acts of adoration.

The Annamites, having lived long ages under the tyrannical rule of their Mandarins are rather timid and crouching. They are accused of being fickle, untruthful, and wanting in respect for other peoples' goods. These vices and many others belonging to depraved humanity, that long ages of Christianity have not yet completely uprooted in the European races, are probably still more inveterate in the heathen Annamite, as amongst all the heathen people: but we are glad to bear testimony that they have been greatly diminished amongst the Christians of Tonkin, and are still more so in their descendants.

As we shall see by the history of our martyrs, the Tonkinese are capable of displaying the finest moral virtues; virtues which may even amount to heroism. He, so crouching, and so timid, will draw himself up before his mandarin and say firmly, "You ask me to

do a thing contrary to the law of God, and to my conscience, I cannot do it." He, so inconstant, will endure the most dreadful imprisonment, flogging, and no matter what torture rather than deny his God.

Many Europeans who judge all the Christians of Tonkin by the few they have had in their service, or by others whom they have heard about, are guilty of great injustice towards them, when they repeat that, "As a rule the Christians are just as untruthful, and dishonest as the others." We protest energetically against these accusations, for in our Missions we have had plenty of opportunities of verifying the contrary.

3.—The history of our Martyrs will show how many were offered their life, for a simple lie or dissimulation. They refused with horror, preferring to be beheaded rather than to tell an untruth. I should like to see whether their accusers would have the same courage under the same conditions.

Until the cannon had opened the gates of Tonkin, the Missionaries were about the only European inhabitants, but since the country has been under the protection of France any one can live there. Nearly every country of Europe is represented, but often by a few individuals only. The French alone are found in any great number. Civil, and military, they are eight or ten thousand, natives of the Mother land and of the Colonies. The Chinese are much more



numerous. Before the country was occupied by France, they carried on the greater part of the commerce; the government found it convenient to let them have the farming of the customs, but this arrangement caused frequent vexations amongst the citizens. They have largely made up for the loss of the customs, for they now possess nearly all the smaller commerce of the country. They set at defiance all competition by their skill, their patience, their party spirit and their knavery. They have little expense and they are satisfied with small gains. Yet they often find means of making pretty good profits. They buy up all damaged can preserves of an inferior quality, all the old goods, which they mend, and sell for new; they have the secret of sophisticating nearly every thing.

They advance money to proprietors and they claim a great part of the harvest. They have formed companies on the rivers of the Delta to buy up nearly all the rice of the country for exportation to Hong-Kong. They trade in opium, both wholesale and retail, they practice usury upon a grand scale and indeed what do they not do? When famine and robbery break out on the other side of the frontier, the Celestials cross it by thousands and swarm Tonkin, they are to be found in every workshop of the railroad, in the mines, on the European plantations, it is hard to say where they are not.

4.—In the mountains of Tonkin, of Annam and of Laos, there are a number of tribes nearly independent whom the Tonkinese (and the French after them), call *savages*, just as the Romans formerly called *barbarians* every nation that escaped their domination. The customs and language of these tribes differ from those of the Annamites, indeed the language differs frequently between the different tribes. The features of these tribes vary, they belong neither to the Annamite nor to the Chinese, to the Indians nor the Malays, they are probably an intermixture of these races and perhaps of many others. Where do these tribes come from? It is the question naturally asked, but difficult, if not impossible, to answer. Are they the descendants of the first emigrants from the cradle of humanity, before the Mongolians and the Malays had driven them back into the mountains? It is possible. Some of these tribes in the North and North West of Tonking seem to be the remains of the Chinese population, who took refuge in the mountains at the time when the Annamites exterminated the greater part of the Celestials and regained their liberty. In the mountains of Annam it would be rather the remnants of the ancient kingdom of Ciampa.

There has been a beginning of evangelization amongst several of these tribes, but the work is difficult and unfruitful both because the population is



dispersed over an enormous surface of a land difficult of access, and unhealthy; and because they are for the greater part nomades. They are also greatly attached to their superstitions, and chiefly because the number of evangelical workers is too small, and the means to support them inadequate.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY IN TONKIN

1. Father de Rhodes. 2. Creation of Vicar Apostolics. 3. Origin of the Society of Foreign Missions. 4. The Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary is invited to send Missionaries to Indo-China. 5. The first Religious who enter Tonkin. 6. Persecution and expulsion. 7. First Dominican Bishops. 8. Half of Tonkin is allotted to the Dominicans.

1.—It is now proved that Christianity was preached in India and in China in the first ages of the Church. Tonkin being situated between these two countries and having been for a long while under Chinese rule it is probable that the apostolic workers or their immediate successors announced the good news in that country: but in the Annals and amongst the existent monuments no indisputable proof has up to the present time been found.

When Father de Rhodes went there in the XVII century he observed a curious custom which may have been a vestige of Christianity. Remarking that they painted a cross on the forehead of the new born babes he asked the natives why they did so. All they knew was that they had received that custom from their ancestors and that they were desirous of handing it down to their descendants.

In the XV and XVI centuries, the Portuguese Dominicans evangelized India, the Isles of la Sonde, the Malaysian Archipelago and came as far as Siam and Cochinchina. They probably advanced even as far as Tonkin, but their apostolic labours left no lasting traces.

The first Jesuit who came to Tonkin in 1626 was Antonio Marquez. He was joined the following year by the celebrated Father Alexander de Rhodes native of Avignon. The King, Vin-Tho, gave them permission to preach the gospel in his states. They built a church in the Capital and being encouraged in the beginning by the Mandarins, Religion made rapid progress.

But it could not continue long thus. Wherever the Christian faith has been preached, it has before long stirred up a more or less violent opposition and persecution. The Devil will not allow himself without a struggle to be thus divested of his ancient empire over the unfortunate children of Adam. If we find, on one hand, the beauty of the doctrine and the consoling promises of the Faith, there is also its stern morality which always finds in the depravity and passions of the human heart a pretext for refusing the doctrine and, if needs be, of getting rid of those who teach it.

This is what happened in Tonkin: the two Jesuits had not been there three years when, in the eyes of

the bonzes<sup>1</sup> and other influential persons, they presented a danger, consequently they were seized, and expelled from the country.

But the children of the Church, are obstinate; and the evangelization of the country was again taken up with more zeal than ever.

2.—When Father Alexander de Rhodes was driven out of Tonkin he had gone to evangelize Cochinchina, from whence he was also expelled. It was then that the thought struck him of going to Rome, and of exposing his ideas for the evangelization of the Eastern nations, ideas evidently inspired by the Holy Ghost, and which Rome was finally to adopt. It was a step of most capital importance destined to carry the Gospel by a new and fertile road amongst the heathen. The opinion of Father de Rhodes was, that Bishops should be given to these new Christian populations growing up amongst pagans; the bishops while seeking help in money and in Apostolical men from Europe, should at the same time form a native clergy, a clergy which he thought, would be of great service for the evangelization of the country. This was a considerable innovation in the Church. Rome only adopted the plan after mature deliberation. The death of Innocent X and the difficulties raised by Portugal, delayed its execution; but at last Alexander VII inaugurated

<sup>1</sup> Name of the priests of Buddha.

the institution of Missionary Bishops, for whom he formed dioceses in the pagan countries. They were to take the episcopal title of an ancient abandoned diocese of the Christian Church. They were to be called Vicars-Apostolic, and their Dioceses Vicariates Apostolic. These Vicariates-Apostolic established since, and of which a great number have been transformed into ordinary Sees, represent perhaps a quarter of the existing dioceses of the Catholic Church.

3.—Whilst Rome examined his project, Father de Rhodes was not inactive: he travelled all over France seeking funds for the Eastern missions.

In Paris, he gave lectures to young men, the greater number of whom were students of law or of medicine; he succeeded in imparting to them his apostolical zeal. It was in this group that was to be born the congregation of Foreign Missions, so flourishing at the present day.

One of them Francis Pallu, having taken Holy Orders was the first Vicar-Apostolic appointed by Alexander VII. He was consecrated at Rome in 1659 with the title of Bishop of Heliopolis; and Tonkin was assigned to him as his Diocese, and, as though it were not enough, he was named administrator of five extensive provinces of China.

4.—He arrived at Siam in 1664, but he could never succeed in entering Tonkin, nevertheless he

was actively occupied, principally in preparing several Annamites for the priesthood; he sent one of them to Manilla to learn the Chinese language, whom he intended should evangelize the Chinese merchants settled in Siam. This native missionary arrived in Manilla in 1672 and was received with hospitality in the convent of St. Dominic: he seems to have revived in the Dominicans an ardent desire of again sending Missionaries to the Annamites, where Father Diego Advarte, succeeding many others had many years before worked and suffered.

This wish became still more ardent two years later on the arrival at Manilla of Father Marquez of the province of the Holy Rosary. He came from Siam where he was to embark for Europe. Not finding a vessel he returned to Manilla bringing with him pressing letters from the French Missionaries, begging the Province of the Holy Rosary to send them some religious to help them in their work of evangelization of the vast regions now called Indo-China.

The Provincial decided to send them six religious. They obtained authorization from the governor of the Philippine Islands, then D. Manuel de Leon. Unfortunately, for some political reason the governor revoked this permission a few weeks later.

In the month of October of the same year Bishop Pallu came to Cavite, near Manilla. For political



reasons, the governor of Manilla always treated him very badly and tried to prevent all communication between him and the Dominicans. He succeeded however in renewing his petition for Missionaries for Tonkin, and the Dominicans got from him much valuable information and letters of recommendation which were of great use to them later on.

5.—Amongst all these difficulties the Dominicans did not abandon their plan, but resolved to send, with as much secrecy as possible, two religious instead of the six that had been destined for Tonkin. Father John of the Holy Cross and Father John de Arjona were chosen. A Chinese pagan consented to give them a free passage as far as Batavia. From there some English protestants who treated them very kindly, got them into Tonkin by way of Port Hien in 1676. This ancient port is now called Hung-Yên.

The following year in the month of October, they received a third companion named Father Denys Moralès.

6.—Having mastered the language the three Dominican Missionaries began to evangelize the surrounding country with the greatest apostolical zeal. They had great hope for the future, when, in the third year of their residence in the country, a persecution, kindled by an apostate placed the seal of tribulation upon their work. Two of them, Father



J. de Arjona and Father D. Morales were seized and enchained, they were led, the cangue<sup>1</sup> around their necks, to the capital and thrown into prison: when besides much other bad treatment they suffered torture from thirst and hunger<sup>2</sup>; they were finally condemned to be expelled from the kingdom, but in awaiting an opportunity they were kept several months in chains, the cangue around the neck like criminals.

Their tribulations were not to end here; embarked on a Dutch ship manned by fanatical protestants, they were conveyed to Batavia, chained to the deck receiving just enough food to keep them from starvation. The Dutch insulted them every day in the most outrageous manner, causing them great suffering by their blasphemous and injurious

<sup>1</sup> The Cangue, which is often spoken of in this book, is an instrument of torture, as well as a means of preventing the prisoners from escaping; it consists principally of two boards hollowed out in the middle to allow the head of the person to pass through them. In Tonkin it is like a small ladder. When the head of the person has been placed in this instrument of torture, the two ends of the Cangue are nailed together or closed with a padlock. The victim can no longer raise his hand to his mouth; at night sleep is very difficult with such a cumbersome collar. Some Cangues are pretty light, but many weigh from twenty to thirty pounds.

<sup>2</sup> Later on in times of persecution we shall see the Christians coming generously to the aid of their priests who are imprisoned for the Faith; but in 1679 there were very few Christians in Hanoi. The Governor of Tonkin gave his prisoners just enough food to keep them from starvation; it was even understood that the prisoner was to be fed by his parents or his friends who paid according to their means, the privilege of entering the prison and of sending in food.

language. From Batavia they were taken to Amsterdam and from thence reached their convent in Spain.

Father John of the Holy Cross alone remained in Tonkin, but he was not discouraged. He continued in secrecy the work of evangelization and was greatly cheered when in 1681 he received a brother religious from Milan, Father Raymond Lezoli who came from Italy, by way of Turkey, Persia, and the Indies. He had been received into the Province of the Holy Rosary of Manilla. He was a man twenty-six years of age, intelligent, virtuous, learned and remarkably clever in medicine. He was destined to work for many years in Tonkin and to render great services to that country.

Until 1693 they were the only Dominican Missionaries in Tonkin. What may give an idea of their activity and of their zeal is that during the period of twelve years they built 70 chapels, and baptised more than 18,000 pagans. In 1693 the Province of the Holy Rosary was able to send two new fathers to help them, and from that time they increased little by little the number of evangelical workers in the Vineyard of the Lord. Thus the field of labor of the Dominicans became greatly enlarged with time, and the numbers of Christians constantly increased. In 1701 the faithful numbered 20,000, in 1750 the number reached 60,000.

7.—Father Lezoli was the first Dominican bishop

of Tonkin, he received his papal Bulls in 1693, but his humility was so terrified at the weight of the episcopacy that he only allowed himself to be consecrated in 1702. Father John of the Holy Cross, who was appointed in 1708, was the second, and Father Thomas Sextri was given him as coadjutor and was consecrated on the 7th of March 1719.

8.—The S. C. of the Propaganda decreed on the 1st of August, that the half of Tonkin east of the Red River, should from that date be confided to the Dominicans, and the following year Father Santiago Hernandez, who was then at Rome, was named Vicar Apostolic of this vast Mission. He did not enter Tonkin until the 12th of March 1763.

## CHAPTER IV.

### VICISSITUDES OF THE CHURCH IN TONKIN

1. The first Persecution. 2. Punishment of Heaven. 3. Apostolical and Missionary work. 4. New Persecutions. 5. First Martyrs of the Order, era of Peace.

1.—The Church of Tonkin has had her share of obstacles to overcome and persecutions to suffer. As we have seen: before the arrival of the Dominicans, the Christian religion had been forbidden and the Jesuits expelled. The Preaching Friars had not been three years in the country when the same treatment was used towards two of them.

There was a recrudescence of persecution in 1696, but as a rule the governors of the Provinces took upon themselves the responsibility of neglecting to execute in their full vigor the Royal edicts. The persecution which broke out in 1711 was much more terrible. Two French bishops and one of their Missionaries were exiled to Siam. A price was set on the priest's heads. At this date the Dominicans had 174 churches or chapels: one only, that of Ke-Sat, escaped destruction<sup>1</sup>; 304 of their Christians remained faithful, confessing their faith amidst atrocious tortures, four letters: Tao Hoa Lang Dao,

<sup>1</sup> The inhabitants prepared beforehand; they gave to their church the appearance of an ordinary house; it thus escaped destruction.

which signify "*Adept of the law of Portugal*" were marked on their cheeks with a hot iron.

2.—During this persecution and the two or three following years, Tonkin was afflicted by such calamities, as prolonged dryness, inundations, pest, fires, that the Christians and even the pagans, attributed them to the divine justice which revenged the innocent blood that had been shed and chastised the king and the persecutors for their cruelty. At the same time it was undoubtedly a means of opening their eyes.

3.—In 1714 the four Dominicans then in Tonkin, reconciled 2,500 apostates, they baptized 1,389 children and 165 adults. It is remarkable that the greater number of those whose eyes had been opened by the extraordinary calamities of the preceding year were bonzes, diviners or sorcerers. Notwithstanding all this agitation, the Missionaries did not lose their time. In a report of this period: Father Peter of St. Theresa, Provincial-Vicar, says that these four Dominicans between 1712 and 1720 heard 135,547 confessions, that they reconciled 3,000 apostates to the Church, baptized 5,859 adults and 7,462 children, administered Extreme Unction 1,931 times, and blessed 1,030 marriages.

4.—From 1715 to 1720 the Mission enjoyed a certain calm: although there were other persecutions in 1717 with imprisonment and great tortures,



in which the Annamite Christians were remarkable in their fidelity<sup>1</sup>.

In 1720 the persecution recommenced worse than ever. More than 150 persons were seized, a septuagenarian catechist died in prison loaded with chains. The Fathers were obliged to seek refuge in the far off mountains, amongst the tigers, far less dangerous than men. On one occasion the Apostolic-Vicar was hidden in a huge basket of rice and a Missionary in a tomb.

In 1722 the persecution became so terrible that seven junks manned by 800 men were sent to surround a village by the sea-side, where Father Sabuquillo and a catechist were to be found. They had orders to kill the Missionary and the catechist and

<sup>1</sup> It is to be remarked that on the list of the Martyrs of the Dominican Mission, beatified by Leo XIII, there were only men named, yet many women courageously confessed their faith during the dreadful persecution of Minh-Manh. Many were cruelly tortured, some even died from the bad treatment they had received, but strictly speaking, there were no female Martyrs in our mission. This may be explained by the fact that during the persecution of Minh-Manh, Bishops and catechists were alone aimed at. It is true that once at work, the Mandarins soon threw the laity into prison, tortured them, and put them to death with their Pastors. They might have done the same thing to the female Christians, but in the eyes of the pagans, women count for so little, that they seem to have left them with the children, as not worth their trouble. The men alone gave them hard work; their prisons were not large enough, nor their means of coercion efficacious against such a number. They probably thought it useless, and that if they succeeded in the suppression of the Pastors, and forced the men to apostatize, the Faith would disappear amongst the women. Later on under the tyrant Tu-Duc many women will be put to death; their names are in the list of some 1500 Martyrs who, we hope so, will soon be beatified.

to take all the inhabitants as slaves to tend the royal elephants. The Father managed to escape and got into Manilla, but the village was destroyed.

The other Missionaries were obliged to live on the rivers in miserable barks, where they hid themselves as best they could. They were captured several times; but found means of regaining their liberty either with money, or with the help of the Christians, and sometimes even by connivance with the pagans. On several occasions the Lord gave them evident supernatural aid to help them out of difficulties. From their hiding-places they exercised as often as possible their ministry. One of them in 1723 during the heat of the persecution baptized 152 adults. In the same year (1723) ten Christians of Tonkin suffered martyrdom, faithful to the end to their resolution, "rather to die than abandon the Faith."

In 1725 the persecution ceased, and there were a few years of peace, during which the Missionaries could repair the havoc of the past, and prepare for the future.

5.—In 1732 the persecution began again and continued for many long years. Two Dominican Missionaries Gil de Federich and Matthew Alonso Liciniana sealed with their blood the Faith they had preached. They were executed at Hanoi the 22nd of January 1745.



The storm of persecution, which had subsided, broke out again in 1770. Two Missionaries were thrown into prison; the Blessed Hyacinth Castaneda and Vincent Liem. The latter was a Tonkinese and had made his profession in the Order of St. Dominic at the Convent of Manilla. They were executed at Hanoï the 7th of November 1773.

From 1774 till about 1830, with the exception of a few pretty serious squalls, the Church of Tonkin enjoyed a certain tranquillity, which allowed it to repair its losses. During this period of more than half a century it progressed wonderfully. By the grace of God it was able to face the bloody persecution which Minh Manh was about to start afresh.

## CHAPTER V

### THE HOUSE OF GOD

1. What is to be understood by the "House of God"? 2. Its foundation. 3. Services it has rendered. 4. Testimony of Father Viadé. 5. Association of prayer amongst its members.

1.—In the lives of the martyrs, which follow, the "House of God" holds such an important place, that it will be well to say a few words about this institution, peculiar to Tonkin, which may well be envied by many other missions. What is meant in Tonkin by the "house of God"? Materially speaking it is the church and the residence of the missionary annexed to it. In reality it includes all persons who inhabit this house "God's household." This household is composed of one or of several priests, according to the importance of the district, catechists, aspirant catechists, and aspirants to the priesthood, who study Christian doctrine, the Sino-Annamite characters and a little literature, also a few lay-men especially occupied in housework, gardening and farming, these latter are sometimes received at a more advanced age, from 25 to 40. They are brave Christians, the greater number with little instruction who, touched by grace, desire to consecrate the remainder of their lives to the service of God. Some of them are widowers. They

have entered by their own free will and they may leave whenever they wish. They make no vows, but when in the "House of God," they must conform their lives to the general rule and observe poverty, obedience and celibacy.

Those who are aspiring to become catechists and those who may later on become priests enter young, between the ages of 10 and 14 years, are offered by their parents who are happy to consecrate one of their children to the Lord. It is then the nursery of the native clergy. The most intelligent and the most virtuous of these children are chosen and sent first to the little seminary to learn latin, and afterwards to the theological seminary. Those who persevere to the end become priests. Others, who during the period of their instruction feel no vocation for the priesthood, or are not found to have the aptitude for these sublime functions, but who ask yet to remain in the "House of God," may go to the catechists' seminary. There are some destined from the beginning to be catechists, and who do not pass through the two former seminaries. As lay-men they take no vows. They can leave when they wish; or they may be discharged by the Superiors if their conduct does not give satisfaction; but during the time that they are in the "House of God" they must conform their lives to the common rule, and observe poverty, obedience and celibacy. They

are fed and clad out of the funds of the mission. This institution is general in all the missions of Tonkin, as well in the French missions as in our own: at least in that which concerns the common life and the principal lines. In the course of time, in the Dominican vicariates, the rule of the house became more thoroughly impregnated with the constitutions of the Preaching Friars. Its definitive form was given to it about the end of the xviii century by Father Felicien Alonso, Provincial Vicar, and later on a bishop.

2.—To find the origin of the institution of "God's house," it is necessary to go back to the beginning of the evangelization of the country. It was ordered, and organized by the first council of Tonkin held at Jut-hia (Siam) the 14th of February, 1670, by Bishop Peter de Lamotte-Lambert, bishop of Berite and first Vicar-Apostolic of Central Cochinchina and approved of by Clement X the 23d December, 1774.

3.—If it be true that a tree is known by its fruit, it must be admitted that the "House of God" is an excellent work. It has been the fruitful nursery from whence have come a numerous phalanx of invincible martyrs, and glorious champions of the Faith, who have peopled heaven, after having consoled the church by their valor and their immortal victories against the powers of Hell. The personnel of

“the house of God” has always been an admirable instrument for the extension of religion amongst the infidels; it has also been in times of persecution a most efficacious means of strengthening the wavering faith of many pusillanimous Christians. It is in its midst that has been, and still is found, the native clergy who under the direction of the missionaries have rendered and are still called upon to render great services to the Church.

4.—An aged missionary of Tonkin, Father Viade of the Preaching Friars, wrote: “To me it seems indubitable that the strong faith with which the Annamite Christian is endowed, is due to the personnel of ‘the house of God.’ The catechists exhort the sinner, revive the faith of the lukewarm, teach and catechise the ignorant, settle disputes, reconcile enemies, seek out the wandering sheep, and help greatly in spreading the Gospel. They are the hands and feet of the Priest, who uses them as powerful auxiliaries for the salvation of souls. In active missions the catechist is indispensable. Without a catechist the missionary can do very little, he is to be compared to a man without feet to walk and hands to work. In times of persecution our catechists have supported with great energy the most incredible labors, exposing themselves to innumerable dangers, they have been exiled and a great number have suffered a glorious martyrdom.



“They administer the temporal interests of the mission, and the spiritual care of Christians<sup>1</sup> is often confided to them, they replace the priest in those things where a minister in sacred orders is not necessary. It is they who examine the faithful in the Christian doctrines and help them to prepare to receive the sacraments worthily.

“The Priest also uses them in many other matters to which his numerous occupations prevent him from giving sufficient attention. Without the ‘House of God’ it would be nearly impossible to recruit young men called to the Priesthood, and catechists in sufficient numbers for the service of the mission.”

These are the words of a missionary who consecrated 25 years of his life to the mission of Tonkin and who was over 13 years at the head of the theological seminary.

There are as many “Houses of God” as there are districts in the Apostolic Vicariate; at the head of these is always a priest, and all these houses together or their inmates are again called the “House of God.”

5.—The members of the “House of God” of the three vicariates actually in Tonkin, confided to the Dominicans, form a pious association by which means each one profits by the good works of the others during his life, and after his death. When a

<sup>1</sup> An example is found in the life of the Blessed Uyen.

member of any one of these Houses dies the members of the other Houses are notified and are bound to pray for the deceased. The catechists are divided into three classes. When one of the first class dies all the priests of the Vicariate say a mass for him. The mission offers 14 masses for those of the second class, and 7 for those of the third class.





LIFE OF BLESSED MARTYR FRANCIS GIL  
DE FEDERICH  
1702-1745.



## CHAPTER I

Birth of the Blessed. Early piety. His vocation. His studies.  
He sails for the Philippines. Hard passage.

Blessed Gil de Federich was born in December 1702 at Tortosa in Spain, the ancient Dertusa of the Romans, situated at the mouth of the Ebro. Baptised on the 14th of the same month, he was named Francis, Joseph, Bonaventure, John the Baptist, Philip, Felix, Thomas, Joachim de Federich. Thus was he blessed with a goodly number of powerful patron saints as his protectors at his entrance upon his earthly career. Not long afterwards on the 3rd of February, 1703, he received the sacrament of Confirmation in the Chapel of the Episcopal Palace.

The house in which he was born is still shown—No. 6 of the street which, formerly called *Ancha* (Broad Street), has since the 8th of December, 1904, borne the name of the Blessed. The family of Gil de Federich belonged to the nobility of Tortosa. The annals of the city have preserved the name of Francis Gil de Federich who, when Tortosa was besieged by the French in 1648, was an officer commanding the defense of one of the fortifications

and, though he acquitted himself of his charge heroically, he was forced to surrender to General Marsin.

His parents were pious Catholics who left nothing undone to procure a sound Christian education for their children and to preserve them from the corruption of the world. His brother Anthony who became a canon of Tolosa and wrote the life of his beatified martyr-brother, tells us that from his earliest years he was piously inclined and that he fully corresponded to the salutary lessons and the solicitous care of his pious parents. Never was a child more docile. He held in aversion all the vanities and amusements of the world and found his greatest pleasure in the Church where he loved to prolong his prayer and to frequent the sacraments. He shunned the companionship of young people of his own age whose conduct was not above reproach.

The Dominicans had at Tortosa not only a large convent but a college as well where the higher education of young men was thoroughly provided for. There it was that young de Federich made his first entry into the field of literature and of the natural sciences. The very appearance of his learned and pious professors together with his intercourse with them inspired him with a desire of entering the Order of St. Dominic. He was only fifteen years old when he petitioned for admission to the convent of

Tortosa. We are not told whether his parents favored or opposed his vocation. It is more probable that, seeing their son so strongly inclined to virtue, they encouraged him in his noble undertaking and offered him voluntarily to the Lord. Having received the most favorable reports concerning the young Francis de Federich the superiors of the convent at Tortosa sent him to make his novitiate at the famous convent of St. Catherine Martyr at Barcelona. All that is known of him during this period is that he was a fervent novice during his year of probation, and that, at the end of the twelve months he was admitted without difficulty to his profession in the year 1718.

From that time he gave himself to the serious study of philosophy, canon law, Holy Scripture, and afterwards of theology. During these years his constant aim was to acquire as complete a knowledge as possible of the divine sciences and to augment the religious virtues in his soul. His time was spent chiefly in the choir singing the praises of God, then in his little cell bent over his books, before his crucifix or sitting before his professors and listening to their teaching.

For some unknown reason he made some of his studies at Barcelona, others at the University of Orihuela and others still at the convent of Tremp, in the province of Lérida where he was ordained to

the priesthood on the 27th of March, 1727, at the age of twenty-four years and three months.

Two years previous, in 1725, Rev. Father Salvador Contreras, a missionary from the Province of the Holy Rosary in the Philippine Islands, made the rounds of the convents of Spain inviting well-disposed young religious to accompany him to the Philippines, there to devote their lives to the meritorious work of converting the pagans. His efforts were not in vain, for thirty-six religious answered his call and set sail for Oceanica. Francis Gil de Federich had been one of the first to solicit this favor. He longed for a life of devotedness; he heard a voice within him calling him to those far distant lands where so many souls were sitting in the shadow of death and he had generously answered: "*Here I am, Lord, send me.*"<sup>1</sup> But his Provincial did not hear. He refused to give up this religious who promised to be one of the glories of the Order. He believed that his place was rather in Spain. However, as Father Contreras insisted, the Provincial agreed to give him Father John de Traveria, another religious of the Convent of Barcelona.<sup>2</sup> Brother Francis de Federich was grievously

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah VI., 8.

<sup>2</sup> Father John de Traveria was the first religious of the Convent of Barcelona intended for the missions of Tonkin, but it was not given to him to enter upon them. The vessel which carried him and another father was lost during the passage from the Philippines to Tonkin.



disappointed by this decision but, being a child of obedience, he bowed his head in silence and continued to pray and hope that a more favorable opportunity would some day present itself.

The Holy Ghost tells us that God does the will of those who fear him.<sup>1</sup> These words were verified in our future martyr who asked Our Lord unceasingly to open to him the way to the Philippines and to the missions among the pagans if such were His will.

In 1729 another emissary from the Province of the Holy Rosary again visited the convents of his Order in the Peninsula asking for young religious who desired to join the missions. He had scarcely reached Barcelona when he received the request of Father Francis de Federich. But the permission of the Most Rev. Father General of the Order was also necessary. Now it so happened that the Most Rev. Father Ripoll, the General, was the same who as Provincial of Arragon had refused to permit Father de Federich to go to the Philippines.

The superiors of Father Gil at Barcelona forwarded his request to Rome fully persuaded that the answer of the Most Rev. Father Ripoll, the General, would not differ from that of Father Ripoll as Provincial. Father Gil prayed fervently

<sup>1</sup> Ps. CXCIV, 10.

that the heart of his superior might be touched. The latter doubtless viewing matters from a higher standpoint, and consulting the general good of the Order, readily gave his consent.

While this brought great joy to the heart of Father Gil, it was a keen disappointment to his superiors and his religious brethren of Barcelona who were heard to murmur very loudly against the Father General and especially against Father Caballero who, not satisfied with having taken from them Father Peter Ponsgrau, was now carrying off Father Gil de Federich on whom they had founded so many hopes. Many of his secular friends and, above all, his relatives endeavored to break his resolution; but he was too firmly strengthened by divine grace to be changed from his holy purpose.

When all had been arranged he bade farewell to his brethren of Barcelona in July, 1729 and set out for Madrid in company with Father Ponsgrau and a few other religious. There a great trial awaited him. One of his uncles, Father Ildefonsus Sans, a Dominican, sent him a letter in which he summed up all the objections already advanced against his departure and added others which he believed capable of shaking the constancy of his nephew. The latter answered simply that in leaving for the Far East he was doing what he firmly be-

lieved to be the will of God, and therefore no human consideration could stop him. He was going, he said, to encounter many labors and probably, much suffering for the glory of God and in expiation of his sins.

He continued his journey to Cadiz, whence twenty-seven religious who were assembled there sailed, August 12th, 1729, in a vessel of the fleet commanded by the Marquis de Mary. Father Gil was the seventh of that apostolic company of which Father Bernard Ustariz was appointed Superior. They reached Vera Cruz early in November after a favorable voyage during which the travellers recited their office in common and made their religious exercises as if they had been in their convent.

From Vera Cruz they went by land to the City of Mexico where the Province of the Holy Rosary had erected a hospice in which their religious who were on their way to the Philippines awaited an opportunity to re-embark in the Pacific Ocean.

For three long months they were compelled to remain in Mexico during the course of which one of their number, Father Manuel Mancelio, fell so sick that they were obliged to send him back to Vera Cruz where he died on February 18, 1730, thus reducing the number of the apostolic band to twenty-six religious. At last, on the 30th of the following March they were able to set out for

Acapulco, a fine harbor on the Mexican coast of the Pacific, and on April 1st they embarked on a vessel bearing the name of "The Holy Family." They reached the Philippines only on the 1st of November. The usual time required for this passage was four months, but the contrary winds and the storms which they met with prolonged their voyage to seven months. They had spent fourteen and a half months in going from Cadiz to Manilla.

It is difficult to imagine to-day the difficulties, the wretchedness and the tedium of navigation at that time. In our day we travel from Spain to the Philippines in one month on large vessels which are literally floating palaces in which the traveller enjoys all the conveniences of life. In the middle of the eighteenth century a year or more was required for the same journey; the passengers were huddled together in small boats which were most inconvenient; the fare consisting almost without exception of preserved foods was far from being healthful, and often insufficient in quantity. The early missionaries therefore had more opportunities for merit than those of our day whenever they were called upon to leave the shores of Europe.

## CHAPTER II

Arrival at Manila. His various offices and employments in the island.

The arrival of one of these bands of young religious, the cream of the Spanish convents, excellently disposed, and burning with zeal for the salvation of souls, was always a source of great joy in Manilla. At the Provincial Chapter held at Manilla in the month of April following the arrival of Father Gil and his companions, the Fathers assembled in chapter manifested in their announcement of this good news to the whole province a very special satisfaction. "This important reinforcement," they say, "has come to us by an extraordinary providence of God when we were not expecting it"—*extempore et praeter opinionem*. The very Rev. Father Bernard Basco was Provincial when Blessed Gil de Federich reached Manilla.

As soon as he was installed in the very strict convent of St. Dominic, Father Gil requested his Provincial to be kind enough to send him to one of the missions in China or Tonkin. He stated that his sole intention in leaving his convent at Barcelona was to devote himself to the conversion of the infidels.

But as he had come to Manilla with the title of



Lector in Theology and the reputation of being a learned man as well as a holy religious, Father Basco replied that it was his intention to utilize him as a professor in the University. This decision was a source of the deepest disappointment to Father Gil but he submitted like an obedient religious without a word of reply, thinking that if it were God's will that he should labor among the infidels, He would find means to have him sent there.

The personnel of the Philippine province was distributed according to its needs and the aptitude of each member. Some were assigned to the work of teaching in the colleges and the University of Manilla; others were employed in the parochial ministry; others still ministered to the missions among the infidels of the Philippine Archipelago, while a fourth contingent labored among the infidels of China and of Tonkin. Since that time the Holy See has also entrusted to this province the evangelization of the Japanese islands of Formosa and of Shikoku.

The province moreover, still needed a certain number of religious to form the community of regular observance at the convent of St. Dominic in Manilla. It had also the care of a number of missions in the different islands of the archipelago, the inhabitants of which, though they were not infidels, had not yet been organized into parishes—

such places were called *doctrinas*, and the religious who ministered to them were called *doctrineros*.

Of all these ministries those which appealed to all as being the most excellent and the most meritorious and most eagerly sought for by heroic souls were those of China and Tonkin which were called *live missions*, not indeed that the others were to be regarded as dead, but their meaning was, as it would seem, that these missions among the infidels were directed against the very heart of paganism and that it was necessary to bring to them more life and strenuosity and to be ready at all times to shed one's blood for the Faith. Indeed, at that very time persecution was raging in China and Tonkin. Many Christians had already shed their blood and there were unequivocal indications of more grievous trials in store for those afflicted churches.

In the Dominican Order authority is not exercised in a tyrannical manner. It studies the aspirations of the souls of its subjects, and whenever higher considerations do not intervene to prevent, above all, whenever a manifestation of the will of God seems evident, it loves like Him whom it represents to do the will of the inferior. Accordingly in order to satisfy in some measure the pious desires of Father Gil who felt drawn towards the care of souls rather than to the professor's chair, Father Basco sent him as a *doctrinero* to the district of



Albucay in the province of Bataan. A little later the chapter of 1731 transferred him to the province of Pangasinan as vicar to Father John Salinas who had been placed in charge of the district of Binalatongan.

Meanwhile the superiors were delighted to behold the confirmation of the hopes they had entertained concerning the Blessed de Federich. He, himself, on the contrary, though resigned to the will of God was filled with a holy sadness inasmuch as his desire to be sent among the infidels was not being fulfilled. The proof of this is to be found in a letter which he wrote at this time from Pangasinan. "My comrades, Liciniana, Ponsgrau and others have been sent to *live missions* while I, a poor, weak soldier, have been sent to this completely Christian village where there are neither dangers nor painful labors."

He seems, however, to have had enough to do, for his duties required him to learn two of the native languages, to preach and teach catechism to a multitude of ignorant people, to administer the sacraments, etc. His superior and the other religious who had occasion to witness it were extremely edified; but all this was far from satisfying him. His heart yearned for the missions of Asia.

An event which happened eighteen months after his arrival in the Philippines seemed to point out for him a very different kind of life from that of the

live missions. Rev. Father Diego Saenz, Provincial, who had appreciated the remarkable qualities of Father Gil, petitioned the intermediate Congregation of 1733 for him as his *socius* and secretary. The Fathers of the Chapter gave their consent, and this newly arrived religious who was only thirty-one years of age was to take his place among the ancients of the Province. According to custom he had still to fulfil the functions of secretary for the provincial council.<sup>1</sup> This honorable and important function which might have flattered him was, on the contrary, a severe blow to him. It occasioned no feeling of self-love in him, and he never ceased to pray and beg his superiors to assign him to the missions among the infidels.

<sup>1</sup> The general chapter of the order held at Barcelona in 1574 had declared: "We admonish and exhort the Reverend Fathers Provincials, reminding them of the account they must render to God, not to allow themselves in asking for a religious as their *socius* to be influenced by natural affection, but that they have in view only the honor of the order and the advantage of their provinces. Let them therefore choose as their companions men who are eminently religious, prudent and learned, having a good reputation, able and skilled to aid them with zeal and the gift of counsel in the fulfilment of their charge. (Const. S. O. Praed; D. II, C. III, Declar. XI, No. 691.)

## CHAPTER III

He is sent to Tonkin. His ministry; his charity and zeal.

While Father Gil de Federich in the company of his Provincial was making the visits to the various convents and missions of Manilla and the Philippines, the Province of the Holy Rosary was sending two of its religious to reinforce the valiant company who were already laboring in Tonkin. They were Fathers Luis Espinosa and Nicholas Milla. Extraordinary news had been received to the effect that the long continued persecutions had at length come to an end. This favor was attributed to Our Lady of the Rosary whose statue stolen from the Christians by the pagans had been brought into the palace of the Chua, Lord or Viceroy of Tonkin. The discovery at that particular time of a conspiracy plotted by a eunuch who was a bitter enemy of the Christians and an instigator of the persecution led with reason to the belief that the Most Blessed Virgin had employed this means to remove the cause of the persecution.

Alas! The peace so eagerly desired continued for but a very brief interval. When Fathers Espinosa and Milla reached Macao they learned that the persecution had broken out with renewed fury in Tonkin. After waiting several months and finding

no means of entering there they returned to Manilla where Father Milla was stricken with a serious illness. It became, therefore, the duty of the province to find some one to replace him, for the project of sending two missionaries to Tonkin had not been abandoned, and it was decided to have them seek another point of entrance.

Then it was that Father Gil, his office as secretary placing him in a position to know what was going on, earnestly entreated the Provincial and his counsel to accept him as a substitute for Father Milla, at the same time handing in his resignation as secretary. The Father Provincial and his counsellors who had learned to appreciate the eminent qualities of Father Gil, at first gave him a peremptory refusal. But we are told that he brought forward so many proofs and evident signs that God was calling him to Tonkin that they were finally forced almost in spite of themselves to give their consent.

He set out with Father Espinosa in March, 1739, by way of Batavia. We have no details of this journey, but the missionaries must have had many difficulties to encounter both at sea and in their efforts to gain an entrance to the field of their mission since they succeeded in reaching it only on the 28th of the following August.

Father Gil was assigned to the house which the

Order has at Tru-Linh in the province of Nam-Dinh where he remained several months in order to learn the Annamite language and to become familiar with the customs of the country. The superior gave him the name *Tê* which means sacrifice. It was a prophetic name for on the soil of Tonkin, the newcomer was to offer up not only the Sacrifice of the Altar, that of his labors and sufferings, but even that of his own life. Gil de Federich had been predestined to be the first Dominican martyr of Tonkin.

Words fail to express the joy which filled his soul when he found himself installed in his little cell in the house at Tru-Linh, with its thatched roof carefully hidden in the most remote part of a village surrounded by tall bamboos. He was thirty-three years old, and the burning desire of his soul, inspired by God, doubtless from the moment of his religious profession was at last realized.

Cha Tê or Father Tê, as he was henceforth to be called in Tonkin, began to study so diligently the language of the country that in four months he was able to fulfil the duties of his holy ministry. But he was far from stopping here. Not only did he study the greater part of the day and of the night but he went so far as to mingle with the children of the house of God, listening while they spoke and making them repeat the words until he felt that he



had caught them well. Sometimes he was laughed at for this, but that made no difference with him. Indeed, he continued for a long time the study of that difficult language until he succeeded in speaking it almost as perfectly as the natives themselves. He began his ministry in January, 1736, in the districts of Giao-Thuy, of Câu-Dinh and Vu-Tiên.

During the two short years of his evangelical labors in these villages before falling into the hands of the infidels, the chronicles of the time picture him to us as a missionary who was very kind to his confrères, always ready to render them a service, very faithful to the rules of his Order and consumed with zeal for the salvation of souls. The witnesses in the cause of his beatification have preserved for us some characteristic examples of his charity. Once he was called to attend a sick person who lived at a great distance. He was himself ill with the fever and the weather and the roads were very bad. His catechists and his servants advised him not to go, offering to bring the sick person to him. But he would not consent to this arrangement, fearing that the patient might not be in a condition to be removed and that the consequent delay might expose him to the danger of dying without the sacraments. He set out, therefore, and, after an incredibly fatiguing journey, reached the sick man with whom he spent the whole night administering to him the



sacraments, consoling him and caring for him after the manner of a good mother.

On another occasion a poor woman sought him in behalf of a sick person who lived in the midst of a pagan village. The journey being very perilous several Christians agreed to accompany him. At nightfall they embarked in a sampan, the men rowing and the good woman steering the boat. But the night was so dark that they were unable to locate Ké-Kinh, the village where they wished to go. It was only after they had gone back and forth times without number that they finally reached the village towards midnight. The woman jumped ashore to go and make known to the sick man that the Father was at the river near by; but she returned in much distress, saying that the patient could not come alone and, having no means to pay porters, no one was willing to bring him. The Father disembarked at once and in the rain proceeded by roads filled with mud to the abode of the sick man where he arrived all covered with mud. Having heard his confession and anointed him, he celebrated Mass and gave him Holy Communion. Before daybreak he was once more in his boat, wet to the skin and shivering with cold but happy in the consciousness of having fulfilled his duty.

On the vigil of a festival he was engaged in hearing the confessions of the faithful in the village

of Quat-Lam when he was informed that soldiers sent by the mandarin to seize him were quite near and that he must flee at once. Thereupon he was seen to raise his eyes heavenward and to murmur a prayer, after which he remained quietly seated and directed his Christians to continue their confessions assuring them that they had nothing to fear. As a matter of fact the soldiers after having searched everywhere except where the Father was, went their way. The witnesses of this event are of the opinion that God wrought a true miracle on this occasion to prevent His servant from falling into the hands of his persecutors.

Father Gil is said to have shown a patience truly angelic in the exercise of his ministry. He was never restrained by the fear of being captured by the persecuting pagans. At night as well as during the day he was ever at the disposal of his poor Christians now in private houses, again in the sampans of fishermen, sometimes waiting several days in succession in these incommodious boats in order to instruct them in the catechism and to administer to them the sacraments. Two months before he was taken by his enemies, under date of May 11, 1737, the Intermediate Congregation of the Province of the Philippines, well acquainted with all that was taking place at Tonkin, inscribed in its acts the following record: "The more the infidels

of Tonkin seek to torment the Christians and to pursue the missionaries, the greener seems to grow the pastures of the Lord and those fields of our heavenly Father. Our brethren resident there are laboring incessantly to gather in the harvest now so ripe and abundant."

Among these was Father Gil de Federich, one of the most indefatigable of the laborers in this field of the Lord. He was, however, soon to fall into the hands of the persecutors of the Church who, after years of suffering, were to procure for him the glorious crown of martyrdom.

## CHAPTER IV

Taken prisoner by the infidels.

At the time when the Blessed Gil de Federich began his priestly labors the persecution was raging with greater violence than before. In virtue of a decree of the 12th of January, 1736, the Christians were compelled to submit to numberless vexations including the bastinado, fine and imprisonment.

The missionaries, constantly on their guard, compelled to conceal themselves and to keep changing their hiding places, were continually hampered in the exercise of their ministry. Four Jesuits lately arrived from Europe had been arrested and put to death. Terror reigned everywhere, yet the work of God was carried on in the face of the greatest difficulty and at the cost of the most painful sacrifices. A missionary<sup>1</sup> writing at this time says: "Since the martyrdom of these Fathers we go out with more freedom than before to administer the sacraments; the Christians have taken new courage and we are admitted more readily into their houses where we celebrate Holy Mass before large gatherings of the faithful and even of the pagans, many of whom are being converted. A goodly number of apostates have done penance and are reconciled."

<sup>1</sup> Father M. de Rivas: "Idea del Imperio de Anam," Ch. XV.

The servant of God continued to spend himself without reserve in this vineyard of the Lord who was soon to reward him for his labors and for his zeal by affording him opportunities of proving the great charity with which his heart was consumed, and of suffering endless torments for His love. As the heart of a lover is never more happy than when he is suffering for the object of his affection, so the just never receive more abundant consolations than when they are carrying a heavy cross after their divine Master.

If the sufferings endured by Gil de Federich up to this time were not sufficient to satisfy his holy desires, the time was coming when he would be called upon to make a complete though prolonged sacrifice of himself to God by a martyrdom which was to continue during seven years and to be finally crowned, as we shall see, by a most glorious death.

The two centuries and a half of religious persecution which have been carried on in Tonkin were, almost without a single exception, instigated by the bonzes who saw in the extension of Christianity, a menace to their worship and a condemnation of their deceits. As early as 1733 an influential and intriguing bonze appeared who was called Thày Tinh, which signifies Master Tinh. Tinh had himself named chief of an expedition set on foot by the mandarins of the Province, and directed against the



Christians and especially against the missionaries. He inflicted considerable damage upon our Christian settlements, above all upon that of Tru-Linh, the chief residence of the missionaries. His main purpose was not only to gratify his hatred for the missionaries, but at the same time to get possession of one of them, thinking that for this brave deed the court would reward him with high honors and great wealth. He hoped also to extort a good sum of money from the Christians who would be sure to try to ransom their spiritual Father.

On the 3rd of August, 1737, Father Gil found himself in the village of Lin-Thuy-ha where he proposed to celebrate the feast of St. Dominic on the day following. On the morning of the 3rd, the weather being at the time rainy and windy, he ascended the altar to say Holy Mass. During the Mass he noticed an unusual agitation among the faithful. A Christian named Ba-Ri who had been keeping watch on the river, had come to warn them that a strange and unknown individual was prowling about his boat. Neither the Father nor the Christians who were assisting at Mass attached any great importance to this warning. However, after Mass, as if he had foreseen what was about to happen, Father Gil had the altar taken down and the ornaments and sacred vessels concealed. Then he calmly withdrew to make his thanksgiving.



At that moment he received an urgent message from the village of Luc-Thuy-ha, begging him to flee with all the Christians who were with him. The latter, thrown into confusion by this startling announcement, rushed towards the river to find a sampan and to rescue their good Father. But they were too late for the house was already surrounded by the infidels. Seeing that it was impossible to save himself, Father Gil told the catechists and the other Christians who surrounded him to conceal themselves or to escape if possible by flight. Then, after having recommended himself to St. Joseph, he presented himself with a serene countenance to the howling mob and said to them: "Whom do you seek? I am him whom you seek." The bonze Tinh who directed this band of brigands, ordered them to seize the missionary. After tying his hands behind his back, they drove him brutally before them to the boat prepared beforehand on the river. He found there several Christian women and a man, all of them bound like himself. When the Blessed Gil saw them he said to the bonze and his company: "Since you have me in your power why do you detain these? Let them go!" Strange to say, the wicked Tinh when he heard this command, had them unbound and set at liberty without uttering a word.

By dint of rowing the pagans very soon landed

their holy prisoner at the house of the bonzē in the village of *Thuy-Nhai-Thuong*. There Tinh asked the Blessed Gil if he were afraid. "Not for my own life," he answered, "but I fear for the people."

As soon as the Christians of the neighborhood had been assured of the imprisonment of their beloved leader they arose in a body to deliver him out of the hands of this wretched pagan priest by force, if necessary, or else to purchase his ransom. In order to deceive them the bonze had recourse to an infamous stratagem. Accompanied by two servants and carrying a sword in his hand, he entered with a menacing air the place where the servant of God was. He ordered him to be tied to a field-bed and an inscription to be placed in his hands, as is wont to be done to criminals who are about to be executed, and he seemed to be making preparations to cut off his head. After a short time, however, he told him not to fear, that all this had been done to frighten the Christians and to keep them quiet.

On another occasion he led him bound like a notorious criminal to a large house where many people were present and one in particular who pretending to be a minister of the king, questioned him on many topics and especially on the Christian faith. The confessor of Jesus Christ took advantage of this opportunity to make known a few important

truths to these benighted pagans. The bonze was doing all this only to legalize in the public eye his criminal act in having on his own authority imprisoned this teacher of the religion who was held in such high repute in that district. By this means the scoundrel tried to extort from the Christians a large sum of money, as the sequel will show. His eldest son, Tsi-Ba, who had previously spoken to the Father and had even given him a fan, approached him hypocritically and said to him: "I am a bad Christian and my name is Dominic. Your case will soon be settled. They are only waiting for the five hundred taëls demanded for your ransom which is sure to be collected." And in order to make his story still more plausible he gave him on behalf of Bà Nhing, a Christian woman, a paper containing a certain kind of powder. The servant of God suffered much while in this prison from the odious Thay-Tinh who kept him almost continually bound and under observation. Once he even brought him to a pagoda and left him on the hard and damp ground for two nights and a day which brought on a violent fever.

The imprisonment of our holy missionary was soon known throughout the mission and caused consternation among the other Dominican religious who had hitherto regarded Luc-Thuy as a very safe place; the missionary, as they thought, was so well

guarded by the vigilance and affection of the Christians that such a stroke was out of the question. But they had reckoned without a certain Judas, a favorite of the Bishop, as it was supposed, who made known to Tinh the whereabouts of Father Gil, and the best means of seizing him.

The capture of the Blessed Gil, as might have been noted, presents circumstances strikingly similar to those attending the taking of Our Lord—the Judas, the false priest, the personal interest, and the expressions: “I am he whom you seek” and “Let these go,” together with the illegal interrogatories carried on by judges without authority.

## CHAPTER V

He is brought in chains to the capital.

Our future martyr, like Our Lord Himself, was handed over to the civil authority. If there was perfidy in his capture there was still greater perfidy in delivering him over loaded with chains to the court magistrates. The Christians had encountered so many obstacles in rescuing him from the hands of Tinh either by force or with money, that they thought now that they would succeed with less difficulty by going directly to the mandarin of the province who having been informed of the affair was making preparations to take charge of the prisoner. Two courageous Christians, John Thu and the literatus Chong-Luang, were deputed to arrange matters with the mandarin at his own residence.

This mandarin, whose name was Phu-Don, was both hypocritical and avaricious; and, seeing in this business a favorable opportunity to extort money, he received the two Christian envoys most cordially. According to the custom, they brought with them a costly gift. He was very indignant at the bonze declaring that his action was both despicable and illegal. The Christians could depend upon it that



the Father would be set at liberty immediately. Delighted with their reception and with these generous promises, the two Christians having delivered to the mandarin the sum they had collected for the ransom of their missionary, which he accepted with pleasure, and set out at once for *Thuy-Nhai*.

On reaching that village in two small boats which he left in the river he ordered a cannon to be fired to announce his arrival and to assemble the people. The one who was most alarmed was the bonze whose house was filled with a crowd of people, the greater number of whom were Christians. Every one thought that they were about to liberate the holy prisoner. On the following day, however, the mandarin gave orders that he should be bound with a rope and conveyed to one of the small boats which he had brought with him. The mandarin caused the arrest also of one of Tinh's attendants who declared himself a servant of the eunuch Du-Gia-Bao, the same, it is believed, who had acted as judge *sedens pro tribunali*, and had interrogated Father Gil. The Christians then reminded the mandarin of his promise who told them to remain quiet and he would soon restore their teacher to them. The mandarin's two boats weighed anchor and, followed by a great number of sampans occupied by Christians, reached the harbor called the market town of Cho-Cat where the party remained a whole day,



the Father being still a prisoner in bonds. The Christians renewed their entreaties and the crafty mandarin informed them that as soon as they should reach Cua-Vuang, their missionary would be set free. But when they arrived at this place the mandarin, throwing off the mask, told the Christians that he would certainly be pleased to liberate their teacher but since his arrest had been so public, he could not do otherwise and he was in duty bound to take him to the King's court and hand him over to that tribunal.

This shameless mandarin, after having basely deceived the Christians and pocketed their money, hoped to obtain from the Court to which he was about to deliver his prisoner, a generous return in the shape of honors and other advantages. Like the majority of his kind, he must have had at heart a deep hatred for our holy religion for, from the moment that he got our martyr under his control, he treated him with great cruelty. His wife and sons were more kindly disposed. They took pity on the Lord's minister and spent much time in consoling him, asking him questions about his country, about the Christian religion and other subjects. Seeing him so weak and stricken with the fever of which he suffered a relapse at Cua-Vuang, they brought him the best nourishment and remedies that they could procure. The holy martyr wrote that

they were so attentive to all his needs that he had only to manifest a wish for something when it was immediately granted. They had his linen washed and rendered him many other services. At this place Father Gil had the great pleasure of receiving a letter from his superior which his servant brought to him concealed in a clean shirt.

Ill though he was, he was compelled to leave Cua-Vuang for Hanoï. The attendant who had brought him the letter, Ou-Kiong by name, went along to take care of him. This servant brought him a bottle of lemonade which in the opinion of the servant of God, caused an increase of the fever. The poor Father was so weak that he could scarcely stand; the road was almost impassable, and several times the guards who accompanied him were obliged to carry him on their shoulders. After travelling for four days they reached Hung-Yen, the port of Hien. Here the mandarin seeing his prisoner so ill, sent to the pagoda Chua-Dang for two remedies to see if they would stop the vomitings and allay the fever which had reduced him to the last extremity. He took the first that they offered him, but feeling that it was of no benefit to him, he refused the other.

On the 23rd or the 24th of August they reached Hanoï where the mandarin went to the Governor's house at once with his prisoner. The following questions were put to him by the Governor. "Is

not the Christian religion prohibited in this kingdom? Why, then, have you come here?" "I have come," he replied, "to snatch souls from perdition." "If the King has your head cut off, what will you do then?" "I shall endure it with pleasure."

He was given into the custody of the body guard in the outer hall of the palace where some Christians from Luc-Thuy visited him, among whom was Anthony Kuong, a physician, who found him lying on the ground in the rain, wet through and clad in a very short garment with his rosary around his neck. This Christian asked the servant of God if there was anything that he would like to have. With his head he signified in the negative. Nevertheless, the physician went to purchase a cocoanut in order to have him drink the water of this fruit; but the guards, suspecting that he wished to poison him, compelled Bien-Thoan, another Christian who was present to taste the liquid first. The poor Father was scarcely conscious of what was going on about him, as he afterwards declared, so completely prostrated was he from the effects of the fever and the privations which he had undergone. Such was his condition while official measures were being taken to hand him over to the Court tribunal.

Here also he found sympathetic souls, even in the Governor's household who gave him some care. Wishing to reward them for this, he preached to

them the Christian faith though he was all but dead. A note which he wrote to his superior at this time reveals to us the heroic dispositions of his soul. "I believe," he wrote, "that God has sent me the fever in order that I might have something to suffer for his love, for I considered the annoyances of which I was the object, and the inconveniences of the prison as being of very little account. Far from making me sad, they inspired me with a signal joy, and I looked upon them as a great favor from God."

It was decided to send the servant of God to the public prison for criminals called *Ba-Mon*. His weakness was so great that they were obliged to carry him in a hammock. He was not locked up, but left in the court where he was exposed to the inclemency of the weather, with no other bed than the bare ground. Under the surveillance of the guard house he had as his fellow prisoner the wretched attendant of Thay-Tinh. During the several days which he spent here a pious Christian woman, the wife of a mandarin, brought him food which he scarcely touched himself, giving nearly all to the attendant of the bonze.

On the 30th of August the directors of the prison Nghe-Don, which was called the oriental prison, scenting a good opportunity of extorting money from the Christians had the venerable prisoner delivered over to them and he was led forth the

same day almost naked, for the jailors of the prison had left him only a pair of drawers and a shirt.

While the arrangements for his transfer were being made he was left chained under a tree at the side of the street. Many infidels and especially the children crowded about him and derided him. They made little crosses of small pieces of bamboo which they contemptuously threw at his feet. The servant of God gathered them up as well as he could, and after kissing them took them asunder. How many times before his martyrdom had he not to endure this sacrilegious mockery! A Christian woman called Ba-Kinh brought him a cup of cocoa milk which revived him somewhat for he was in a fainting condition. She found means also to visit him in his new prison and to bring him linen which the Christians had sent to him.

The new jailers at first treated the confessor of the faith very roughly and, as a result of this treatment, he became so weak that his end was thought to be near. The Christians alarmed by his danger brought to him the Annamite priest, Nghai, under the guise of a physician and cousin of the Christian woman who had by the use of money obtained permission to visit him. He thus had the great consolation of making his confession. Three days after his arrival at this new prison the infamous jailers, in presence of the Christian woman, Ba-Kinh,



bound his feet in fetters and loaded him with a heavy chain, saying to her that if the Christians would have the Father freed from the fetters and the chain, and if she herself wished to continue to bring him food they must be paid twenty ligatures a day. For one month the Christians paid over this amount, after which the dear prisoner, having sufficiently recovered, begged them to pay no more. The Christian woman whom the soldiers of the prison threatened to denounce found it no longer possible to continue her charitable office. She was, however, acquainted with an old woman living near the prison, a pagan, but of a natural goodness of heart, whose name was Ba-Gao. Her she requested to replace her with reference to the Father. She gave her consent and was to him up to his martyrdom a veritable angel of mercy.

A word here concerning the bonze Tinh. The mandarin Phu-Don taking advantage of every circumstance to raise himself in the esteem of his superiors, accused the rascal of having seized the missionary without authorization and of having kept him ten days in his house. This is his explanation of the affair to the mandarin of the court: "Learning that a teacher of the Christian religion was travelling through my province I landed at Thuy-Thai, I inquired into the matter and I found that an Annamite named Tinh was supporting and keep-



ing in his house this religious teacher by the name of Te, and with him several religious objects which I have the honor to deliver with him to the king's magistrate."

This skilfully worded accusation appeared to the magistrate to be very serious and he resolved to bring the bonze to trial. This it was that made the case of the Venerable Confessor of Christ drag along so slowly. The matter could have been decided in a moment, but the quibbling of the Annamites and their trickery, always through some motive of self-interest, kept it going on for seven years. However, Thay-Tinh had powerful friends at Court and he had good hopes of coming out victorious in spite of the accusations of the mandarin of his province.

## CHAPTER VI

### Blessed Gil in the prison of Hanoi.

When Father Gil reached Hanoi, in August, 1732, there resided in that city, then as now the capital of Tonkin, the Chua, or Lord Uy Uong<sup>1</sup> who ruled as king for fourteen years. Father Lechaude tells us that he was a stupid, vainglorious prince who at first made use of his power only in the gratification of his pleasures. Surrounded by flatterers and courtiers he forgot the edicts fulminated against the Christian religion by his predecessors; but when selfish and long continued enjoyment had begotten weariness and disgust, the monarch felt within his heart a revival of the persecuting instincts of his family.<sup>2</sup>

We do not often find in the history of the church an instance of a confessor of the faith who was kept seven years in prison, often loaded with chains and submitting to a thousand vexations at the hands of his jailers, ever expecting to be condemned to death and yet able during the greater part of this time to

<sup>1</sup> Uy Uong ended miserably. Thrown to the ground one day by a stroke of lightning, he lost almost completely the use of his reason. The sound of thunder caused a convulsive trembling of his limbs, and to escape the wrath of heaven he had a subterranean dwelling dug in which he lived for fifteen years, while one of his relatives, Trinh-Danh or Minh-Uong occupied the throne. (1739.)

<sup>2</sup> Parochial Bulletin of Hanor for Feb., 1903.

exercise his sacred ministry to souls—to hear confessions, to instruct, to baptize, to celebrate mass and to give Holy Communion. Yet this was the case with the Blessed Gil de Federich.

And what is not less extraordinary is that these magnificent results were due in a great measure to two pagan women, Ba-Gao and her elder sister. These two good creatures gave themselves body and soul to the work, first, of making the prison life of Blessed Gil more tolerable, then, of obtaining for him by degrees a little more freedom, by distributing judiciously to the jailers and the soldiers the money collected by the Christians and making use of a thousand ingenious means to gain their confidence and make them more kindly disposed towards their prisoner; providing him with food and nourishment by means of the alms of Christians it is true, but giving generously of their time and their influence. Both were to reap the reward of their charity by receiving the gift of the faith. The elder of the two was baptized before her death, and her sister, Ba-Gao, likewise baptized by the servant of God under the name of Rose, survived him, was present at his martyrdom and was the tenth witness in the cause of his beatification. “Once,” she says, “about the third month of the Father’s captivity, my sister asked one of the keepers to be good enough to pay her a sum of money which he owed her.

The keeper expressed his indignation at her claim and all the jailers chimed in with him, and to emphasize his resentment he locked up Father Gil and kept him chained for a whole day. My sister then telling her debtor that he might pay his debt at some future time, begged him to be so kind as to release the prisoner. His anger was appeased and he did as she desired. On another occasion during the same time he was permitted to come into my house. During the time when he was kept continually in the prison, before the permission to go outside had been purchased for him, I carried his nourishment to him; but on certain days the soldiers objected to this until I had given them the money they demanded."

One of the first services of Ba-Gao to the prisoner was to procure writing materials to enable him to correspond with his superiors and certain Christians who were unable to reach him. One day when he was writing to his confrères, two soldiers came up and looked curiously at the pages covered with characters which they could not understand. They wished to know what he was writing. He gave them an evasive answer with which these big children were obliged to be satisfied.

He had been in this prison about two months when Ba-Gao and her sister purchased permission for him to take his meals in their house. A little

later he was able to remain the whole day there reciting his office and saying his prayers in peace and receiving the Christians who came to visit him. Then commenced that grand apostolate which he carried on continuously during seven years. The Pro-Vicar Apostolic of the Western Vicariate, Mgr. Neez<sup>1</sup> was happy to grant him all the necessary powers to exercise the sacred ministry. He even wished to name him pastor of Hanoï, but though he accepted the labor for the good of souls in as far as he would be free to perform it, he modestly refused the title thinking with reason that the serious obligations of a pastor were incompatible with his condition as a prisoner. Mgr. Neez procured for him the holy oils, a ritual, and other necessities for the administration of the sacraments, and he resumed his missionary labors with almost as much freedom as he had enjoyed before falling into the hands of the infidels.

During these last months of his first year of captivity he had the consolation of baptizing several children of Christians and several pagans, whom his fervent exhortations had converted on their deathbed, and of hearing the confessions of many Christians.

<sup>1</sup>Mgr. Neez of the foreign missions was only Pro-Vicar in 1735. Two years later he became Vicar Apostolic of Western Tonkin. Up to our Martyr's death he was most kind to him.



At the end of October he was summoned for the first time before the royal tribunal. He therefore left the prison chained and escorted by jailers and soldiers. In going and returning he had to submit to many humiliations. Several times his guards halted to drink a cup of tea, or for other reasons leaving their prisoner in front of the houses on the street. At such times there was no lack of idlers, especially children who crowded around to torment, insult and laugh at him. The uproar and the obstruction which resulted, incommoded and irritated the peddlers, and the owners of the neighboring houses blamed the confessor of the faith and treated him brutally, in their turn throwing him into the canal or in the middle of the street.

That which gave most pain to the poor Father was to see that crowd of children who never grew tired of throwing at him little crosses of bamboo in mockery while he kept picking them up, kissing them and unmaking them. Sometimes absorbed in prayer he pretended to see nothing hoping thus to put an end to the sacrilegious sport. One day a big boy, seeing this, silenced the crowd and with mock gravity cried out: "Look, look! the Father denies his faith to save his head from being cut off." In hearing these words the servant of God turned quickly toward the one who had uttered them and said to him: "No, my son, no, I have not and never will



deny my faith"; then, addressing all with sweetness and, showing that he was very strongly moved that such a thing could even be thought of concerning him, even as a joke, he added: "You are the ones who deny and violate the laws of nature by so cruelly tormenting a sick prisoner who has done you no harm, by despising the cross and by making a mockery of this emblem and this sign of salvation for all men."

He then collected as well as he could the little crosses, and venerated them by first kissing and then detaching the cross pieces. This was what the rabble were waiting for in order to have a laugh at his expense. If these pagan children thus tormented him, what shall we say of his judges who, as soon as they became familiar with his case, forced him to drink of a chalice bitter beyond expression every time that he had to appear before those unworthy magistrates?

We have already recorded his first appearance on the oath of the mandarin Phu-Don and the memorial to the king by the bonze Tinh, when there appeared with him also three Christians of Luc-Thuy-Ha and the bonze himself. The sitting opened with the following question by the president of the tribunal addressed to the Blessed Gil: ((Have you been taken prisoner in the house of one of these four? In which?" "In the house of Tinh." He

answered, "I have never entered the houses of these three." The judge then sent out the four others and kept Father Gil only, to whom he put the following questions:

The Judge: "Where do you come from?" Father Gil: "From the kingdom of Spain." The Judge: "How long have you been in Tonkin?" Father Gil: "About two years." The Judge: "Who brought you in?" Father Gil: "I do not recall his name." The Judge: "Where have you been living for the past two years?" Father Gil: "I have had no fixed abode; I have travelled from one place to another." The Judge: "Who has taken you and brought you to this tribunal?" Father Gil: "The mandarin." The Judge: "In what house did he apprehend you?" Father Gil: "In Tinh's house." The Judge: "How many days did you remain in that house?" Father Gil: "Ten or eleven." The Judge: "Have you taught him the Christian law?" Father Gil: "No." The Judge: "What, then, were you doing?" Father Gil: "I did other things which must be a matter of indifference to you."

When this interrogatory was ended which the secretary falsified on several points, particularly in that the confessor had remained two years in the house of Thay Tinh, he was sent back to prison and during the return journey he suffered the same annoyances as in going. He was cited by the magis-

trates of the tribunal to appear on the following day. He was, therefore, led back in chains, his hands manacled, at ten o'clock in the morning when the heat of the sun is terrible, and escorted by a crowd of myrmidons and satellites.

On his arrival at the tribunal, the magistrates sent him back to prison that day being, as they said, a holiday. What did these judges care for the annoyance and suffering of their prisoner? On his way to the tribunal this day he had to endure a new torment. The prisoner and his attendants were passing in front of a temple dedicated to the ancestors of the king when the soldiers ordered him to uncover and to make a profound reverence before the temple. Having refused to perform this act of idolatry, he was insulted, threatened, and treated with nameless ignominy. On the day before his irons had inflicted frightful wounds on his legs which the jostling of this day, the harassing crowds, fatigue and the intense heat made so much worse that he fell into a state of unconsciousness. They were obliged to carry him insensible to the prison where, during fifteen days, he was in a critical condition and suffered excruciating pain. His whole body was covered with purulent pustules resembling the itch. Nevertheless he was calm, and continued to bless Our Lord who came to his assistance providentially by means of the two old ladies, Rose Gao

and her sister who, on this occasion were more kind and devoted than ever.

By dint of entreaties and of money, and under the pretext that they wished to effect his cure they obtained permission for him to spend not only his days but even some of his nights in their house. A little later, in return for a monthly payment to the jailers, he was allowed to spend as much time as he desired in the house of his benefactors, both day and night. Once cured of the ills just described he expected to be called again before the judgment seat. This was his ardent desire, and he esteemed himself happy to confess the faith of Jesus Christ in the hope of martyrdom in the near future. But how much longer was he not to wait for this supreme grace!

## CHAPTER VII

New interrogatories. The ministry that he exercised.

In January, 1738, the last lunar month of the year, according to the mode of reckoning in Tonkin, during which it was customary to end all lawsuits begun within the twelve months preceding, the Blessed Gil had every reason to believe that he was nearing the object of his desires and that he would soon have the happiness of shedding his blood for his faith. Such was, however, not according to the designs of Our Lord. The whole month passed without their taking any action regarding him either because the preliminaries of his case were not completed or by reason of an embassy extraordinary from the Emperor of China which arrived at that time.

The conditions, therefore, remained unchanged. His health was stronger and he began to instruct and baptize, to hear confessions with almost the same facility as a missionary at liberty. In August or September of that year a native priest came to say Holy Mass in the house of Rose Gao at which he assisted and received Holy Communion for the first time during his captivity. Growing bolder, he



requested his superior to send him the ornaments and other necessities to enable him to say mass himself. By this means he was able to offer the Holy Sacrifice on the 6th of October, the Feast of the Holy Rosary, a happiness from this time which, enjoyed almost daily, enabled him to give Holy Communion to many Christians.

That same year though he was cited twice to appear before the tribunal, he was not interrogated. The judges, however, pronounced sentence which they based upon the preceding interrogatories. The arrest of the Blessed Gil by Phu Don was approved, and he was condemned to be beheaded. At the same time Thay-Tinh and his son whom the mandarin had represented as protectors of the Christians, were condemned to take care of the elephants of the Chua for six years, one of the most degrading punishments inflicted in Tonkin.

The bonze's protests were all in vain. They did not believe him. This sentence which is dated the 10th of July, 1738, was signed by the king on the 12th of the following September. On the 6th of November his name was inscribed in the register by the tribunal and the order for his execution was sent on the 22nd of the same month.

In the meantime Master Tinh, furious at his condemnation and the more so by reason of the charge of his being a protector of the Christians when he



was their bitter enemy, appealed from the decision of the court. It was, however, confirmed in the following terms: "Let Cu-Te, Father Gil, be beheaded, and let the bonze Tinh and his son labor in the elephants' stables; the former because he is a teacher of the Christian religion, the two others because they received and entertained him in their house." The bonze found means to make a second appeal and finally succeeded in having the proof admitted that he did not deserve to be condemned as a Christian. All this litigation was the cause of endless delay. Our Blessed Gil who had seen with something like envy two criminals who had been sentenced on the same day as himself being led to execution, really suffered at being thus deprived of his crown. He wrote sorrowfully to his superior: "I did not deserve to obtain that which my pride had dared to presume, for Our Lord is very greatly offended by my sins and my ingratitude."

The year 1739 came. Thanks to the generosity of the Christians which secured for him a certain amount of liberty, he was able to continue his ministry. At the provincial chapter of that year held at Manilla in April, the Fathers announced to the Province that it had the honor of possessing a confessor of the faith awaiting in prison the moment when he would shed his blood for Jesus Christ. "They had learned," they said, "by the letter of a

Jesuit Father that their dearly beloved Brother Gil de Federich had been condemned to death in the month of August preceding."

On the 20th of July he was cited to appear before the court of justice. While going and returning he had as usual much to suffer both morally and physically. Not only did the children throw little crosses at him to insult his religion, but one of the judges so far forgot his dignity as to do the same. He formed a cross of two tip-cats (sticks) and threw it at the feet of the servant of God who picked it up, kissed it piously, separated the cross sticks and returned them to the judge, whereupon the latter was vexed and uttered a threat against the prisoner.

The presiding officer of the court placed him in front of master Tinh and the three Christians from Luc Thuy-Ha and put to him the following questions:

The Judge: "By what right did you go to the house of Thay-Tinh? Where were you before going to that house?" Father Gil. "I came to this country four years ago. Two of these years I have spent in prison, the other two in going about from place to place preaching the holy Christian law. As to specifying where these places are, I do not wish to do so." The Judge, irritably: "Admit that what you said last year is true." Father Gil: "What I said then is said; but I now refuse to speak on that

subject." The Judge, furious: "You are an impostor. You were then telling lies and you will not now repeat them." Father Gil: "It is not for that; but I was not under obligation to make known what I then told."

At this point the bonze, seeing that his case was not taking the turn that he wished, interrupted the mandarin and asked to be permitted to speak, which was granted. He then gave a summary of all that the Blessed Gil had said the year before. He dilated at length on the capture of the missionary which he had himself accomplished most emphatically not to favor the Christians whom he hated, but in order to deliver this foreigner to Phu-Don. He had kept him ten days in his house for that purpose only. The holy martyr did not deny these assertions which were true; but, knowing that the court wished to punish those who had showed him hospitality at Luc-Thuy-Ha, spoke as follows: "Last year I said only the truth; but I was not obliged to say that Tinh had taken me at Luc-Thuy-Ha. Now I will not make any further explanation on this point because these questions of the court are aimed only at the punishment of our hosts and the reward of the one who took me prisoner, which is unreasonable and unjust." The Judge then said in an angry tone: "Will it also be contrary to justice to cut off your head?" Father Gil replied: "Un-

doubtedly; but if you order me to be beheaded for my faith, I will endure it willingly."

The Judge then declared with solemnity that if the prisoner should persist in refusing to reply categorically to the questions of the court, he would order that thirty blows with a club should be given to him on the knees. This was a frightful punishment made use of generally to extort from an accused prisoner whatever they wished him to tell. Father Gil replied that he would willingly suffer this punishment rather than to speak further on the subject. The Judge seemed to admire this determined resolution. He directed a court attendant to trace the figure of a cross on the ground. Then he ordered all the prisoners at the bar to trample upon it. Blessed Gil indignantly protested, whereupon he was carried by force and held over the sign of our salvation. In spite of blows he kept his feet suspended in the air as long as they persisted in doing this violence. The judge hurled the most terrible threats at him, but all in vain. Thay Tinh, delighted by this opportunity of showing that he was not a protector of the Christians began to dance madly upon the cross. Then he informed the Judge that the Father had in his prison several religious articles which he requested him to have brought to court that he, Tinh, might trample them under foot and insult them in fine style. The judge after hav-

ing given orders that they should be produced on the following day, dismissed the court.

Two days later, on the 22nd of July, he was again summoned. On his arrival at the court of justice, he found there the holy images, his books and his sacred ornaments which had been seized on the denunciation of the impious bonze. They opened the sitting with an attempt to force from him the admissions which he had been unwilling to make at the previous sitting of the court; but when they saw that he could not be shaken in his resolution, they did not insist. The Judge then questioned him concerning the images and other objects there present, especially about a brass crucifix. Blessed Gil replied: "It is the image of Jesus Christ the Son of God who became man and died on the cross to redeem men from sin." The judge added: "What is this other one here?" "It is," said Father Gil, "the image of the Mother of God who bore this crucified Lord." "And where do men go after death?" said the Judge. Father Gil: "The dead body remains in the ground, but the soul ascends to heaven or descends to hell, according to the merits or demerits of each individual in this life." The Judge: "What you say of the soul is pure fiction. Who has said that things will pass away in that manner?" Father Gil: "God has said it." The Judge: "Indeed! and did you hear God saying



it? Father Gil: "Though I did not hear him saying it, it is none the less certain that he taught this."

During this interrogatory a court attendant whose name was Ta-Vu brought into the court room a heavy club which he deposited at the feet of the servant of God. Thinking that they were about to inflict the punishment threatened at the former sitting, Father Gil began to prepare his knees for the horrible punishment. The judge told him that the club was not to be used as an instrument of torture. "I command you to take it," said he, "to strike these religious images of yours with it, and destroy them completely." On hearing this infamous order, the confessor of the faith, inflamed with a holy indignation seized the club and hurled it with all his strength to a great distance. The mandarins were so dumfounded by this audacious act that they stared in open-mouthed wonder and, strange to say, they made no attempt to punish him. An attendant went in search of the club and having found it placed it very near to Thay-Tinh who eagerly grasped it and made it plain that he would ask nothing better than to carry out the order given. Triumphantly brandishing the club he was in the act of preparing to vent his rage upon a beautiful ivory statue of Our Lady of the Rosary when Father Gil, seeing his intention, shielded with his hand



the head of the Infant Jesus and that of His Mother and said to the bonze: "Strike my hand." Seeing this the Judges began to laugh and said: "These Christians are deluded by their statues."

The impious Tinh called upon the court officers to come and remove the prisoner's hand from the statue. But he kept it so firmly fixed to the statue that the first who came was quite powerless to remove it. The second was equally unsuccessful, and it was only when they combined all their strength that they finally overcame his desperate firmness. Then it was that the despicable bonze was able without opposition and with satanic fury to break into pieces the blessed statue, while the servant of God groaned and wept at his own impotence. Thay-Tinh wished also to tear in pieces a picture of the Most Blessed Virgin painted on paper. Father Gil, however, had time to snatch it from him, kiss it and conceal it in his bosom and they left it to him.

The Judges intervened to restore peace and gave orders that the Father should be left undisturbed saying: "The statue must have felt great pain from these blows." Blessed Gil made answer. "The Most Blessed Virgin and her Son are in a place where they can suffer neither pain nor sorrow. If we honor their images it is to remind us of them and to do them homage." This ended the sitting. The

Confessor of Jesus Christ was led back to prison where a still greater trial awaited him.

A jailer impelled by sordid avarice informed the missionary that he ought to supply a certain sum of money to pay the court attendants who escorted him to and from the judgment-seat. A certain man who had heard of this attempt at extortion told Father Gil that one-third of the sum would be more than sufficient and that the jailer wished to keep the other two-thirds for himself. Father Gil acted upon this advice, whereupon the avaricious jailer in a fit of rage had him put in fetters and swore that whosoever should bring him anything to eat would receive the same punishment. For three days no one dared to bring aid to the poor prisoner. God, however, came to his assistance in another way as he himself relates. It happened that a charitable pagan woman distributed to all the prisoners generous supplies of cooked rice and meat. He received an abundant share which was sufficient to meet his necessities for three days when the jailer relaxed in his severity. Father Gil then began to doubt whether this cruel treatment was caused simply by the avarice of the man or by an order of the court of justice in punishment for his having refused to answer.

The exhaustion following these sittings of the court, and the brutal treatment of the jailer brought on a fever and dysentery so acute that all who were

about him believed that his last hour had come. His superior when informed of this, sent Minh, a priest of Tonkin, to give him the last sacraments. Before his arrival, however, Father Gil had made his confession to a native priest. To the great astonishment of all, he began to grow better and was soon restored to health. Then it was that he wrote a memorial concerning all that had taken place since his arrest. The officials of the court of justice did not come to any agreement to put an end to this triple lawsuit. All were agreed that the missionary should be condemned to death; but there were endless discussions as to what was to be done to the three Christians of Luc-Thuy and to the bonze. The King named an additional judge as a referee by whose decision they were to be guided. Tri-Lai was the judge selected, and Blessed Gil tells us that he was a peaceable man and well disposed toward the Christians.

On the 20th of September he appeared again *Coram tyranno*, before the tyrant, as he said, and the judge put to him the following questions: "How many years have you spent in this kingdom? Were you taken upon your arrival? Have you preached the faith?" Father Gil: "I have spent four years in Tonkin. I preached the faith for two years." The Judge: "Is it true that you were ten days in the house of the bonze?" Father Gil: "I travelled

from place to place preaching the faith, ten days here, fifteen days there. I was in the house of the bonze but ten days." The Judge: "Since the faith is prohibited by the King, why have you come to Tonkin?" Father Gil: "The King has no such right, for kings have not an infinite power to give orders according to their whims." The Judge: "Are you learned in astronomy?" Father Gil. "No."

After this interrogatory the missionary was told to withdraw, and the discussion was resumed. A mandarin, Tri-Do by name, and a strong defender of Thay Tinh, having come in unexpectedly, Father Gil was recalled while Tri-Do repeated the tedious questions which he had already answered so frequently. This mandarin then said to him in a bantering tone: "The favorable month for going to heaven has come." Father Gil calmly replied that every month was favorable for that journey. Then in a serious tone Tri-Do requested him to state whether it was true or not that he had remained only ten days in the house of Thay-Tinh and that he had taught him the faith. He answered that he would not say another word on the subject of his arrest, for he saw clearly that they wished to make him say that he had been taken at Luc-Thuy, which would condemn the Christians and acquit the bonze. Father Gil requested Tri-Do to set the

Christians of Luc-Thuy at liberty. This, however, was useless for that declared enemy of the faith preferred to have his friend the bonze remain thus under sentence in order to bring about the condemnation of the Christians.

Before Father Gil had absolutely refused to answer, Judge Tri-Lai requested him to put his signature to the written record of his own evidence, but when he saw that the secretary had written down that the accused was "a teacher of the false law," he firmly refused to sign the record unless they would blot out this insulting phrase. The mandarins consulted for a long time and finally substituted the words: "Portuguese religion contrary to law." With this amendment, Father Gil consented to sign the document. He was led back to prison where for two long years he heard nothing more of his trial.

This apparent forgetfulness of the servant of God's case was due to the civil war which broke out in the four corners of Tonkin. The condition of affairs had compelled all the priests to leave Hanoi, so that Blessed Gil was the only one remaining to provide for the spiritual needs of the Christians. During these two years he was able without much difficulty to perform this ministry, thanks to the money which the Christians gave in large sums to the jailers who permitted him to be



absent from the prison for whole days and nights. They even authorized him to go to a considerable distance in the country for several days in succession. Towards the end of 1741 he forwarded the report of the sacraments that he had administered from the time of his arrest. We read, with astonishment that he was able during this time to hear 3767 confessions, to baptize 122 persons, both children and adults, and to administer extreme unction to 88 sick persons.



## CHAPTER VIII

Blessed Gil obtains prestige at the Court of the King—Efforts to effect his ransom.

In January, 1741, the last month of the year according to the method of computation in vogue in Tonkin, a rumor spread to the effect that the trial of Father Gil de Federich was at last to be brought to an end, and that he would undoubtedly be beheaded. This was a subject of the greatest sorrow to the Christians who had conceived a profound veneration for their holy missionary. But Thay-Tinh was always there with his powerful protectors to obtain another stay of proceedings which again filled the Christians with the hope of purchasing the liberty of their Father.

On Holy Thursday he was able to celebrate Mass in the presence of a great number of Christians and even of infidels in the palace of the Chua's brother, Prince Diu. This prince, as is well known, had a Christian mother whose name was Diu-Ba-Tram, and in order to please her he had placed his house at the disposal of the Christians. On the Holy Saturday following Father Gil celebrated Mass at the village of Bo-De on the other side of the river in the presence of a still greater number of the faithful. These events did not escape the notice of the court mandarins as the sequel will show.

The civil war which had broken out three years before was continued with greater fury than ever. The King was in a state of exasperation at this state of affairs. One day the thought occurred to him, or was perhaps suggested to him that this foreign religion from the West which he was persecuting might, after all, be the means of putting a check to the war and of assisting him to conquer his enemies.

Towards the end of September the King's uncle had the servant of God brought to his palace where he conversed with him for about a half hour on the subject of religion. Father Gil spoke to him with such energy and conviction that the prince addressed him about as follows:

"It is well: I see how reasonable is the faith which you preach. What I have just heard convinces me of the truth of that which I have read in various books treating of religion. It is the only one that can be accepted since the teachings of the other sects are illogical and untenable. As I am interested in you and your religion I ask you to return to-morrow and to bring a book treating *ex professo* of the Christian faith, for I wish to understand it thoroughly so that I may be able to speak of it with knowledge to the King, my nephew." He also told him to bring with him an Annamite scholar capable of explaining the words whose signification might be difficult of understanding to a foreigner like him-

self. Our missionary went away much pleased with the interesting prince who had so cleverly concealed his duplicity under the appearance of open-hearted friendship and cordial affection.

On his return to the prison he learned from Christian members of the prince's household that the only aim of the latter was to discover if Christianity would supply some means of putting an end to the war. On the following day not having been summoned to meet the prince, Father Gil forestalled him by a letter which ended as follows:

"According to our faith there is one supremely efficacious remedy for public evils and that is to ask God for peace and to promise him that the King and his government will never attack the true religion. If the King wishes to end the war let him cease to persecute the Christians and their religion. This is the cause of all the evils of the kingdom."

The King's uncle had no further consultations with the missionary; he preferred to consult a witch who astonished him intensely by telling him plainly that the cause of this disastrous war was his having killed four missionaries, then three others, and his still keeping one more in prison. The prince admitted this to three mandarins, one of whom took it upon himself to ask the King to grant freedom of religious worship. In the meantime, however, a false rumor had spread to the effect that the Chris-

tians of the South had rebelled and everything remained in *statu quo*, the war continued for a long time afterwards, and every kind of calamity, including floods, drought and pestilence, fell upon unfortunate Tonkin.

Meanwhile the Christians of Hanoï had resolved, at any cost, to obtain the release of the servant of God. They thought that they would be able to make use for this purpose of a Buddhist priestess, an aunt of the King whose name was Di-Chua. Her influence with the King being great, she was to say to him that, being merciful to all, he would vouchsafe to extend his kindness to Father Gil who, after having been detained in prison for seven years, was condemned to death, though he was guilty of no crime, having come to Tonkin only to preach a religion the aim of which was to make men better. That he would therefore be good enough to grant him his liberty and to permit him to remain in his kingdom.

Di-Chua at first brought forward many objections saying that the Christian faith was opposed to the law of But (the idol), and that she would be unable to plead such a cause. "However," said the avaricious pagan, "if they give me four hundred taëls I promise to do it." When Father Gil heard of these negotiations, he opposed them with all his energy. The Christians were obliged to have re-

course to his superior who ordered him to allow the matter to proceed. But a Christian having brought him an appeal prepared by the priestess, he read with indignation what Di-Chua proposed to say to the King in order to be more certain of success. Her report was to be that Father Gil was no other than a merchant, arrested under the pretext that he was a Christian which had been found to be false; that the one who had arrested him had been punished, etc., etc. He sent word to the priestess that if she dared to present to the King a petition filled with so many lies, the Christians would not give her as much as a cent. The hypocrite promised for an additional consideration of one hundred taëls to plead the missionaries' cause not with her own arguments but with those of the Christians. As a matter of fact she did nothing else than to present to the King the first petition that she had drawn up.

But God was guarding the good name and the doctrinal purity of his servant, and of that afflicted band of Christians and he did not allow them to be dishonored by misrepresentation and falsehood. The King indeed graciously received the petition of his aunt and made answer to the effect that what was requested would be granted provided that the reasons presented were true, which was equivalent to a refusal for the case having been re-examined, it was proved the reasons given by the priestess



were a tissue of falsehoods. Things continued in the same state all that year during which the confessor of the faith heard 1711 confessions, baptized 31 adults and 23 children and gave extreme unction to 51 sick persons. The Chapter of Manilla convened on the 4th of March, 1743, speaks as follows of the work of the Dominican missionaries in Tonkin: "Our missionaries are laboring valiantly in that kingdom in the midst of the greatest trials, privations of every kind and constant peril to which the cruel persecution against religion exposes them. Among them all the Rev. Father Francis Gil de Federich is especially distinguishing himself whose sentence of death has not yet been carried into execution by reason of the fact that the King and his ministers are deeply engrossed with matters incident to the civil war. From this there has followed the truly marvellous result that Father Gil has established a mission in the prison itself and thanks to his excellent dispositions of soul and by a singular providence of God, he is so planting and watering the faith in the hearts of the natives of Tonkin that abundant and excellent fruits of every virtue are being gathered, for the infidels are coming of their own accord to him and receiving the faith. Thus is God blessing the labors of his minister."

Towards the close of the year 1744 additional trials and contradictions came into the already pain-



ful life of Father Gil. For some unknown cause the officials of the prison began to quarrel among themselves with the result that the Father was permitted to go out only during the day. At night he was locked in the prison.

On the 3rd of March, 1745, our martyr was directed to appear at the court of justice together with the four others accused with him. On the way the secretary, seeing on the neck of Blessed Gil one end of his rosary which had escaped from beneath his clothing, asked him if he were carrying with him some religious article. "Only this," said Father Gil, pointing to his rosary. Whether in consequence of the secretary's having spoken to the judge, or whether the judge himself had noticed the rosary on the confessor of the faith, as soon as they reached the court of justice, he asked him for it. "Will you return it to me?" said the Father. On receiving an answer in the affirmative, he gave it to him. While the magistrate was carefully scrutinizing the rosary, his attention was attracted to the two medals which hung suspended from it, and he inquired what they were. "They are the pictures of two saints who died for the faith." The judge added: "And are you willing to trample them under foot?" "Never while I live will I be guilty of such an act of cowardice," said Father Gil. The judge then addressing the infamous Thay-Tinh,

asked if he would trample them under foot, and upon his prompt answer that he would do so, the rosary was given to him. No sooner had he received it than he threw it upon the ground and had already lifted his feet to profane it when Father Gil, with a holy indignation, threw himself upon him and made a supreme effort to rescue his rosary. The judge cried out to him to stop, and, when this had no effect, he commanded the attendants to intervene. One of these seized Blessed Gil by the hair with great cruelty, and thus separated him sufficiently from the bonze to allow him without interference to trample upon the rosary and the medals. Blessed Gil protested, crying out with a loud voice broken with sorrow: "Why do you thus persecute the faith of Christ? You are the cause of the chastisements and calamities which afflict your unfortunate country."

It may be readily inferred from all that took place at this audience that the judges had once more appeared upon the scene and that the bonze Tinh had won the court over to his side. As a matter of fact Father Gil was again condemned to be beheaded and Tinh and his son were completely exonerated. The Christians of Luc-Thuy who had been in prison all this time were also set at liberty.

Blessed Gil went back to prison hoping that the

crown of martyrdom which had so long eluded him was at last within his grasp. Before the consummation of his sacrifice, however, Our Lord was holding in reserve for him a great consolation. On May 30th, 1744, to his great astonishment and joy he saw soldiers conducting to his prison at Hanoï one of his religious brethren who was closely bound to him by the tie of a holy friendship. It was Father Matthew Liciniana whom he had left in Spain, and who on the 29th of November of the preceding year, had been taken prisoner at Luc-Thuy-Ha and dragged from city to city as far as Hanoï where he was to die with Father Gil.

The day after this happy event was the feast of the Most Holy Trinity. "Brother," said Father Gil to the new comer, "in this palace in which we meet again, the Lord has granted me the great favor of having a chapel. I am about to offer therein the holy sacrifice and I invite you to assist at it." This was the first time since his imprisonment that Father Liciniana had heard Mass. On the 4th of June following, the feast of Corpus Christi, he had himself the happiness of celebrating Mass in presence of 130 Christians and many infidels. During that year Blessed Gil heard 1745 confessions, he baptized 32 adults and 41 children and administered the sacrament of extreme unction to 11 sick persons.

In the following August the King gave orders that the idols should be carried in procession and that great sacrifices should be offered to obtain relief from a drought which was desolating the country. On this occasion he set at liberty a number of prisoners and commuted the sentences of a number of those condemned to death. A rumor had spread which had reached Manilla where it was recorded in the acts of the Chapter of 1745 to the effect that the death sentence of Father Gil had been commuted to imprisonment for life. But there was no truth in this rumor. The favors of persecutors of the church sometimes go to the greatest criminals, but very seldom to confessors of the faith.

The two prisoners of Christ continued to make use of the restricted liberty at their disposal and to do all the good in their power to those who were near them, firmly believing that the consummation of their sacrifice was not far distant. In December a Christian having made known to Father Gil a proposal of the secretary of the court of justice to erase his name from the list of those condemned to be executed, on the payment of a certain sum of money, the Father answered with animation: "Listen! do not give one sapeque. I have been waiting long enough to be put to death for Christ."

## CHAPTER IX

### Glorious Martyrdom of Blessed Gil.

At the opening of the year 1745 the rumor was still more prevalent among the Christians of Hanoï that the King had commuted the death penalty of the two missionaries to imprisonment for life. Father Gil did not believe it. On the contrary he was firmly convinced that the hour of his martyrdom was approaching, basing his belief on the fact that his confrère had received a notification of this commutation whereas he had not. In fact he knew on the 19th of January from the Christian Nguyen-Xuyen who loved him much, that the final sentence had been pronounced against him. This Christian had been warned beforehand by Thay-Khoa, the secretary. On the 21st the sentence was made public and announced to the confessor of the faith. The execution was to take place on the following day. At last he was to seize the glorious crown which for eight years had eluded his grasp. However, the Christians who loved him so tenderly made a last attempt to deprive him of it. They were inconsolable when they heard that their Father was to be beheaded on the following day. On the very



evening of the 21st, the leading Christians sent a deputation to the King's uncle offering him an immense amount of money if he would vouchsafe to intercede with the King, his nephew to have him recall the sentence of death. When Father Gil heard this he was much afflicted. He despatched his catechist to the honorable gentlemen with the following message: "We exhort the pagans to be converted and once converted to suffer every torment rather than to lose the faith. If in the present circumstances they see that we show any weakness by refusing to die for the faith or by consenting to escape this sentence; if they see that we purchase our life, at the price of money, the infidels will be confirmed in their paganism and the Christians will no longer be eager to suffer for the faith. For these reasons, my beloved sons, I command you to lay aside your project for I shall never consent to give even the smallest piece of money to ransom my life."

The Christians bowed to the strong will of their teacher as thus expressed, and awaited with sorrowful resignation the moment of his martyrdom.

From the moment that Blessed Gil heard the good news, his soul was filled with an overwhelming joy which was reflected in his countenance. In his humility he addressed the following words to the Christians who came to see him and to ask a last blessing: "Beg of God that the great favor which



he grants me may not be for me a cause of pride. Ask him to make me firm and joyful up to the moment when I shall shed my blood for Our Lord Jesus Christ." Then he thanked them profusely for all the services they had rendered to him, comforted them, gave them his blessing and, with touching sweetness and affection asked them to meet him in the bosom of God.

All were in tears except himself, and like a father saying a last farewell to his children, he spoke tenderly to them, reassuring them and promising that as soon as he should reach heaven he would be more useful to them than at present. The moments when he was left to himself during this day were spent in prayer and contemplation. When evening was come he expressed a wish to assemble his best beloved disciples at his own table and as though it were a day of great joy, he consented to eat an omelet which he had not done for a long time, so great was his abstinence. During this last supper, therefore, he rejoiced with a holy joy together with his confrère, Father Liciniana and his Christians. Then he said grace and asked them to recite for the last time with him and for him the holy rosary. Then seating himself again and making a sign to them to do the same, he said to them: "My dear children, at this moment I think of myself as like Our Lord at the last supper, and so I would exhort

you after the example of Christ my Master, to love one another as brothers, to remain firm in the faith which you profess, ready to suffer in its defense every kind of torment, to put all your hope in God and to sigh for that everlasting life which we await and to despise the goods of this life which are so fleeting. He then repeated his thanks for all that they had done and suffered for him during these eight years. As all then broke forth into sobs, he who up to this time was so composed of countenance, began also to feel his emotion getting the better of him, and he wept with the others, so that for a considerable space of time he was unable to proceed.

He was going to withdraw to prepare himself for the great day of his triumph, but the sobs and entreaties of his Christians retained him. They threw themselves at his feet and said: "Father, you will not refuse to let us kiss your chains." Restraining them with difficulty he replied: "Oh my children, you know that I have never permitted that; but at this supreme moment I have not the courage to deny you this consolation." Scarcely had he said this when the first to fall at his feet to kiss his chains was his fellow prisoner, Blessed Liciniana. Father Gil wished to prevent him but the look of entreaty which he encountered caused him to let him have his way. After him all satisfied their devo-

tion while Blessed Gil absorbed in God said: "Oh my children, what a great grace martyrdom is, but it is a pure gift of the divine goodness. No man could merit it and certainly not I." He then retired into the corner of the prison which had been assigned to him as his dwelling, and began to pray in preparation for the great day.

About three o'clock in the morning the two prisoners of Christ heard each other's confession, assisted each other to celebrate Mass for the last time. It may be easily imagined with what ardent love and fervor they received into their hearts Him for whose cause they were soon to shed their blood.

After making their thanksgiving they went together to bid farewell to the prisoners, to the jailers and to all whose acquaintance they had made during their sad stay in the prison. Blessed Gil, with a smile on his lips, had a word of encouragement and of thanks for all. He distributed among the poorest of them the remains of his food and money.

A great number of people had assembled outside of the prison to pay their last tribute of respect to their spiritual Father. He allowed them to enter, and for some moments addressed them, exhorting them to persevere and telling them to meet him in heaven. All were sobbing; he alone was calm and smiling. He could not, however, conceal his emotion in saying farewell to Rosa Gao, the holy woman,

his convert, who even before her baptism had rendered him so great service. Clad in the habit of his Order in which he wished to die, and chained like a common malefactor, he then awaited the coming of the King's executioners to lead him out to his death.

Then a very touching scene ensued. Father Liciniana who was inconsolable at not having been deemed worthy of sharing the lot of his companion, begged the mandarin of the prison to at least permit him to accompany him to the place of punishment. This favor was granted. Custom required that all who were condemned should on their way to death pass before the King's palace to make a last appeal for pardon, if they so desired. Some Christians, eager to make one last effort in favor of Father Gil, entrusted to Father Liciniana a petition asking for the pardon of those condemned to death. The Father was to present it to the King as they passed in front of the palace. Father Gil hearing of this design at the last moment, disapproved of it and mildly reproached his confrère. The latter replied that he could not do otherwise than to accept it but he was not disturbed about it since he had no hope of its success.

The attendants whose duty it was to escort him to the place of execution came shortly before noon. They tied his hands behind his back. He was

bound with a chain which after encircling his neck, separated at the hips into two parts which descended to the feet where they were fastened with a bolt. As he was also bound with ropes it was very difficult for him to walk. Eight common criminals had been held in reserve, doubtless to add infamy to the punishment of the servant of God. He walked at the head of this funeral procession as though he were the greatest criminal of all. As they were on their way from the prison to the palace it rained heavily and he was drenched to the skin. While they were presenting the petitions to the King, he was so faint from fatigue that he sat down on a stone. At that moment one of the eight condemned men went to him and telling him that he was a Christian asked him to hear his confession. This he did, thus exercising his ministry of reconciliation to the very end. Father Liciniana was near by clad in Annamite rags. Just then a eunuch came up to ridicule and insult them. He threw at their feet several small crosses made of bamboo. These they quietly picked up, kissed and detached the cross pieces. These insults which had filled their souls with sadness, were succeeded by an event which consoled them immensely.

The King, extremely angry at the audacity of Father Liciniana in presenting a petition for the pardon of his companion condemned him also to



be beheaded. When this news was brought to them the two confessors of the faith were at first surprised, but soon they blessed God and thanked Him effusively for the favor of shedding their blood together for the faith and of triumphantly entering into glory together. The multitude who surrounded them, three-fourths of whom were Christians, broke out into heart-rending sobs on learning that they were about to be deprived of both of their devoted spiritual fathers.

Some time after mid-day the funeral procession began its march to the place of execution which contemporaneous documents call Quan-Bac-Dau-Mo. On reaching the place the two confessors kissed the ground which was so soon to be watered by their blood. Blessed Gil was so weakened that he sat down while they were making the preparations necessary for the execution. Bowing his head he appeared to be absorbed in profound contemplation and heeded not the insults of the pagans who even then continued to put foolish questions to the martyrs and to shower them with little crosses.

The supreme moment had come. The two sons of Dominic mutually absolved each other. They caused a ligature of sapeques to be distributed among their executioners. Though they were surrounded by a crowd of several thousand persons, the most absolute silence prevailed. Suddenly a



royal guard in a fine new uniform approached Blessed Gil and said in a loud voice: "Cu Te, I have the greatest respect for you, and it gives me great pain to have to do to you that which the judge commands me; but you see that I cannot do otherwise. I beg of you to be seated properly and to hold your body erect in order that I may tie you easily." From the voice and gestures of Blessed Gil he understood that he was grateful for his kind sentiments and he calmly allowed himself to be tied to a stake.

The chains and cords were removed and, at a given signal, the two executioners with a single stroke severed the heads of the two martyrs. This was about four o'clock in the afternoon of Friday, the 22nd of January, 1745.

As their souls ascended to glory a cry of intense grief broke forth from hundreds of Christian lips: "Oh Fathers of our souls! Oh beloved Fathers!" And many were heard to give vent to their sorrow in heart rending sobs.

When criminals are executed in Tonkin, it is customary for all to run away as soon as the head falls, through a fear that the souls of malefactors have power to harm those whom they may catch. On this occasion nothing of the kind took place. Not one took to flight. On the contrary, the Christians, overcoming their fear of the soldiers and the man-

darins pressed forward in crowds to get possession of the chains, the cords or some pieces of the garments of the martyrs. They carried away the grass and earth saturated with their blood and the soldiers offered no opposition.

The priests, the catechists and the leading citizens of Hanoï had given a large sum of money to the mandarin who was to preside at the execution to ensure the preservation of the martyrs' remains from outrage and to have them handed over as soon as possible. This, however, was unnecessary. Not only did the Christians get possession of the greatest part of their clothing, but one of them even succeeded in carrying off the head of Blessed Liciniana. An old sorcerer got possession of the head of Blesed Gil and was running off with it concealed under his clothing. But he was seen by a Christian who pursued him and wrested this treasure from him by force. In the evening of that day the two venerated heads were placed in the hands of Peter Xavier, a native priest, who after having washed and venerated them, deposited them in a place of honor.

## CHAPTER X

Honors paid to the bodies of the Martyrs. The burial.

The servants and friends of the martyrs strictly fulfilled the orders of the Vicar Apostolic and the Vice Provincial concerning the disposition of their remains. They had quickly secured a boat in which they deposited the mutilated bodies and the two heads and, on the day after the martyrdom with a happiness as great as if they were bearing a great treasure, they sailed down the river accompanied by many of the leading people of Hanoï and its vicinity, on their way to Luc-Thuy-ha where a great number of Christians together with Fathers Louis Espinosa and Pius de la Sainte Croix, awaited them.

When they had come near the place and the catechists Dien and Loan were preparing to carry the holy bodies ashore, a dispute arose among the representatives of the villages of Ke-Bui, of Tru-Linh and of Tru-Le, all of them wishing to have the remains deposited in their churches. The quarrel grew very bitter and the contestants armed with bamboo sticks were on the point of coming to blows when fortunately Father Espinosa appeared in their midst. He begged of them to cease their cries and listen to reason: "These two martyrs," said he,

“were made prisoners in Luc-Thuy-Ha; it seems, therefore, fitting that their remains should be interred there. In the absence of the superior I decide that this shall be done.” All submitted to this order with docility.

On the 26th, after the multitude had satisfied its devotion by kissing the feet and the hands of the martyrs and by applying their beads and other objects to their bodies, they were buried in the house in which they had been taken as prisoners. Three days after the interment the Vicar Apostolic and the Vice Provincial with several Fathers and a great number of Christians having arrived, all were disappointed to find that the holy bodies had already been buried. They readily yielded to the request of a deputation of leading Christians who came to ask permission to have the bodies transferred to the church as being a more fitting place for them. The burial place was therefore opened on the 29th when not only was there no bad odor detected, but many perceived a heavenly perfume differing from anything they had ever known. All were enthusiastic and eloquent of the great number of favors and graces obtained through the intercession of the martyrs. Again thousands of persons wept as they kissed the feet of the confessors of the faith.

A splendid procession was arranged and the bodies were carried to the church where they were interred

with great solemnity, each in his own coffin. The *Te Deum* was chanted and the bishop gave orders that the usual steps taken for the beatification of saints should be begun at once in behalf of the servants of God.

The holy remains were kept in the church of Luc-Thuy-Ha, under the devoted and watchful care of the missionaries and the Christians until the 12th of November, 1903, when, in obedience to an order from Rome they were removed by Bishop Fernandez assisted by several of his priests. All the bones, even the smallest joints of the fingers, were found in a good state of preservation.

The outcome of the legal process for the beatification of Blessed Gil de Federich was that he was always a fervent religious, an apostle devoured by zeal for the salvation of souls, pious, mortified, charitable, united with God by constant prayer, so much so that before becoming a martyr for Christ, he had reached an eminent degree of sanctity which was many times attested by the gifts of prophecy and of miracles.

Although his humility led him to conceal the gifts of God, he declared that notwithstanding all the obstacles which stood mountain high in his way, he would in the end be sent on the Asiatic missions where he would shed his blood for the faith. He clearly foretold to his confrère, Father Liciniana,



that he too would be a martyr. He predicted to the Christians of Tonkin several events which afterwards came to pass.

While he was still exercising his sacred ministry, he was, one day, on the river in a small fishing boat on his way to attend a sick call. Some pagans who were determined to seize him knowing this, began to pursue him and overtook his sampan into which they threw themselves with savage cries. They turned everything upside down and after having searched every corner of the boat, and though they jostled him in their search they did not see him—to their great astonishment and the wonder of the Christians present.

He converted and cured either by his prayers or by the simplest remedies a great number of sick persons, especially the sister of Rosa Gao, an obstinate and extremely superstitious pagan who ridiculed him whenever he exhorted her to be converted, and, foretold to her that she would die a Christian. Having contracted a serious illness, she acted so strangely that all believed that she was possessed by the devil. Of her own accord she asked to have the servant of God pray for her. He did so, and at once she grew quiet and begged to be baptized. After the reception of the sacrament she recovered her health. A month later she fell sick again, received the last sacraments with piety and died an



edifying death. "I have great confidence," wrote Blessed Gil, "that God will receive her into the heavenly company."

One witness deposed that the head keeper of the prison had a special love for him out of gratitude for the cure of his wife of a serious illness by causing her to drink a certain potion.

"Every one regarded as in some way miraculous," says Cardinal Pieroti, "the fact that as they were on their way to be martyred, the sky hitherto clear became suddenly overcast. The crowd who accompanied the servants of God were alarmed and cried out: 'The sentence is unjust and heaven is showing its displeasure because they are about to put these two just men to death, while so many criminals in the kingdom are allowed to remain unmolested.'"

The same multitude saw with astonishment two doves flying above the two servants of God some moments after their heads had been cut off.

Agnes Su-Ri who testified during the process of beatification, affirmed that many infidels and some even who were possessed by the devil were cured by contact with the blood of the martyrs. A still greater number of Christians were freed from various diseases by making use of pieces of paper stained with their blood.

Even the picture of Blessed Gil, as his biog-

raphers assure us, which were widely distributed after his glorious martyrdom wrought numberless prodigies. Among the most remarkable of these were the cure of Don José, dean of Barcelona, of Don Philip Francis de Hone, a nephew of Blessed Gil, of Mrs. Mary Térésa Lleida, of Don José Antonio Talern, a lawyer of Barcelona, and several Annamite Christians and pagans.

## CHAPTER XI

Beatification of the Venerable Gil de Federich and honors paid him.

The Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin, Mgr. Hilary of Jesus of the Order of St. Augustine, wrote immediately after the martyrdom of Blessed Gil to the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda communicating all the information that he could gather concerning the life and glorious death of Ven. Father Gil de Federich. He published in Rome, Italy, during the following year, an account of the life and martyrdom of these two missionaries of his Vicariate which was widely diffused throughout the Eternal City and from there to the entire Christian world.

When Pope Benedict XIV was informed of the victory of the two sons of St. Dominic over Tonkin paganism, he rejoiced exceedingly and gave public expression of his joy in full consistory in presence of the cardinals by delivering a magnificent eulogy of the two martyrs. He gave orders that a solemn thanksgiving should be offered to Almighty God in Rome and throughout the entire Church, and he invited in a special manner the Order of St. Dominic to rejoice and to bless God for this new glory added to its illustrious record.

The Master General of the Order at that time was the Very Rev. Father Ripoll who, when he was Provincial of Arragon, had refused to grant Father Gil permission to go to the Philippines, but who, on becoming head of the Order a little later, had given his consent. Great was his joy when he learned that one of his fellow countrymen, his spiritual son, had carried off the crown of martyrdom. About the 23rd of November, 1745, he had the good news communicated to the whole Order and invited all the convents to thank God for this signal favor, at the same time expressing the hope that these two recent martyrs would one day be placed upon the altar.

The tidings of the martyrdom of Blessed Gil did not reach Manilla until the 1st of March, 1746, fifteen months after the event. The joy that its announcement brought to his religious brethren was so great that for three whole days the bells of their church pealed forth the joyful news to the people of Manilla and were answered by those of the Franciscans. The two Orders, as is well known, have always shared their joys as well as their sorrows. The people were filled with enthusiasm and performed their part in this scene of joy. A very solemn service was celebrated in the Dominican church to which all the civil and military dignitaries of the colony came of their own accord, together with all

the religious orders, all the confraternities and an immense concourse of people not only from Manilla but from all the surrounding country. The ceremonies opened with a *Te Deum* sung in a most affecting manner by thousands of voices, a musical Mass accompanied by a full orchestra and finally, a procession greater in numbers than any ever seen there, during which the statue of Our Lady of the Rosary was carried in triumph.

The Chapter of the Dominicans of Manilla of 1746 announced to the whole province the glorious news of the martyrdom of two of its sons in terms almost lyrical. It reads like a song of triumph. The chapter of 1751 earnestly requested the Very Rev. Master General to be kind enough to take the necessary measures to have the cause of these two illustrious sons of St. Dominic introduced at Rome. In 1766 the Very Rev. Father Boxadors, then Master General, announced to the Province of the Holy Rosary that this cause in which he was so intensely interested was then very far advanced. The Rev. Paul D. Nghien, an Annamite priest, had been sent to Rome with all the documents which it was possible to collect in order to hasten the happy event of the beatification. Don Antonio, a brother of Blessed Gil, published an abridgement of his life and martyrdom requesting all who possessed writings of information concerning him to kindly send the



same to Father D. Nghien at Rome. The Bishop of Tortosa added his own exhortations and efforts to the same effect.

In 1769 the Holy Father directed the Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin, Mgr. Hernandez, to commence the apostolic process and finally, on May 16th, 1772, the congregation of cardinals named for this purpose, declared the apostolic process together with that of the Ordinary to be valid and this verdict was confirmed seven days later by Clement XIV.

The sad events which disturbed Rome and the rest of Europe at the close of the 18th century prevented the conclusion of the cause already so far advanced. Not until 1891, 119 years later, was it possible to take up the cause again, Pope Leo XIII having graciously consented to dispense with several of the usual ceremonies. In 1900 he ordained that the cause of Blessed Gil de Federich and of Blessed Liciniana be joined to that of the Venerable martyrs, Castagneda and Liem, also Friars Preachers, who were put to death for the faith in Tonkin, in 1773. On the 10th of December, 1908, Pius X confirmed the decision of the cardinals and declared that they could in all security proceed with the solemn beatification of the aforesaid Servants of God together with that of four other Dominican martyrs of Tonkin—Ven. Jerome Hermosilla, Ven.



Valentine Berrio-Ochoa, Ven. Peter Almato and Ven. Joseph Khang.

Nothing was wanting now but the proclamation of the Papal Bull fixing the day for the solemn glorification of the Venerable martyrs. The Holy Father deigned to designate the 20th of May, 1906, as the never to be forgotten day when in the basilica of St. Peter splendidly adorned and illuminated for the occasion, their images were for the first time publicly exposed for the veneration of the cardinals, a great number of Bishops and a multitude of priests and faithful assembled from all parts of the world, but especially from Spain.

LIFE OF THE BLESSED MARTYR  
MATHIEU-ALONSO LICINIANA  
1702-1745



## CHAPTER I

Birth of the Blessed. His studies in the college of the Jesuits. His vocation; he receives the habit. His theological studies. He offers himself to the Province of the Holy Rosary. Temptation; end of studies. Sickness. He offers himself again for the mission. He leaves.

Blessed Mathieu Liciniana was born on the 20th of November, 1702, in a place called "La Nava del rey," diocese of Valladolid, in Spain, and was baptized the same day. His Godfather was Mathew Ruiz and his Godmother Jane Miguel. His parents were fervent Christians and, it is thought belonged to the nobility. His father was a physician.

We know none of the particulars of his childhood except that he was brought up with every possible care by his pious mother. His parents destining him for a liberal career sent him early to the college of the Jesuits of Villagarcia. He took with him the written testimonial of the curé of his parish: "Young Mathieu has always been, to my knowledge, of pure and most Christian morals, a friend of recollection, intent on study, and of a very remarkable maturity of judgment in his actions and his whole conduct."

At the end of his studies with the Jesuits another testimonial, apparently of one of his masters, is expressed thus: "His conduct has always been so edifying that every one loved and esteemed him, above all because of his modesty, of his peaceful and recollected appearance, of his application to study and of many other precious qualities."<sup>1</sup>

This is a very short account of the youth and adolescence of our future martyr. It is sufficient, however, to give us a very high idea of this chosen soul in which the pious education of the family and the college had, with the grace of God, developed the germs of a glorious vocation. In fact, towards the end of his literary studies the young Liciniana felt inclined to consecrate himself to God in the religious life. His Biographies do not tell us why he chose the Dominican life nor why he asked to be admitted at the convent of Segovia. Perhaps it was the meeting of a Religious of the Order, the reading of the life of St. Dominic, or the advice of his director which thus definitely influenced his life, it matters little; feeling himself called, he answered as the youthful Samuel: Lord, here am I.

Our Blessed was in his twentieth year when he presented himself at the convent of Segovia. The information concerning him was so excellent and his supernatural dispositions were equally so good that

<sup>1</sup> Taken from his Biography written by P. Navamuel.

they received him without difficulty. To his great joy he was clothed with the habit of the Preachers in the month of July, 1722, and the 22nd of the same month the following year, on the Feast of St. Mary Magdalen, he had the happiness of pronouncing his solemn vows. It was under the generalate of the Rme. Père Pipia who later became a cardinal of Holy Church.

During his year of probation, Brother Mathieu made his apprenticeship of the spiritual life consecrating the greater part of his time to prayer, to meditation, to the singing of the Divine Office and to mortification both exterior and interior. This life was a delight to him, for in it he tasted sweetness in comparison with which the pleasures of the world were as nothing. After his profession, while still continuing, though in a less degree, this life of prayer and monastic observance, he was occupied with the philosophical studies which were to form his mind, he was initiated into the sacred science which was to make him apt in the discharge of the sublime functions of a Preacher and a Conductor of souls. He had been a fervent novice, he was a hard-working student.

After making his vows he had hardly spent two years of this life of prayer and study, when in the year 1729 a Delegate of the Province of the Holy Rosary, armed with full powers by the Rme. Father



General, presented himself at the Convent of Segovia inviting the Religious of good will to go to reinforce the Province of the Philippines and enable it to accomplish its noble destiny, that is, to carry the light of the gospel to the unhappy people of Asia, seated in the shadow of death. He was filled with enthusiasm at this idea and resolved to offer himself for this work of devotion. He went therefore to the Delegate and asked to be inscribed amongst those Religious of good will whom he was seeking. Very soon afterwards, bidding farewell to his dear Convent of Segovia, he left for Madrid where the recruits were to meet who were soon to embark for the Philippines.

What happened then? What temptation came to assail him? The fact is that he changed his mind, and declared that he would not go to the distant missions. But being ashamed to return to Segovia he begged of his Provincial to send him to another convent to finish his theological studies. The latter consented and assigned him to a convent of the city Toro. There he spent four years which he ended by passing with honor his examinations as preacher and confessor. He was there ordained priest. He acquired then the reputation of a studious scholar, of a good Religious and of a loving brother.

At that time he fell so ill that he believed himself

to be at the point of death. In the light of eternity he bitterly reproached himself for his cowardice four years before and said to himself: "Who knows if the Lord is not punishing me for having failed to keep my word with Him?" The grace of God working in his soul he made a vow that if he were healed he would embark for the Philippines as soon as it was possible. To the surprise of all he promptly recovered.

He was not kept waiting long for the chance to fulfil his vow. In 1729 another delegate of the Province of the Holy Rosary, the Father François Caballero, visited Toro. Father Mathieu Liciniana after humbly confessing his previous cowardice to him, told him of his grave illness and his vow and begged him to accept him for the missions, assuring him that this time, by the grace of God, he would be constant and faithful.

The 4th of July, 1729, in company with two brothers, not yet priests, Martin Hernandez and Anthony Campo, he bade farewell to the Convent of Toro. A great number of brothers, of relations and friends accompanied the three travellers as far as a place called the *Cross of Valère*. There they bade them a touching adieu, many tears flowing. Some kissed the scapulars of those who were taking leave. Others begged their blessing, addressing words of encouragement to them and made appointments with

them in Heaven. As they went away the travellers heard these last words: "Valiant children, may God watch over you! The heretics will put you to death—you will be martyrs of Christ. Pray for us." This was a prophecy, at least for Father Mathieu Liciniana.

The three young Religious continued their journey on foot as far as Cadiz, the port of embarkation. It took them nearly three months to reach there. They had indeed much to suffer for it was the time of the greatest heats of summer. They were making their apprenticeship of the apostolic life. The new sons of the Province of the Holy Rosary that met together at Cadiz from different convents of Spain, numbered 27. From the first moment the greatest cordiality and a perfect charity reigned amongst them. Had they not indeed, these young and generous men, the same fervent desires, the same love of God and of souls? They were going to be exposed to the same dangers, to the same privations, they were hastening to the same abandonment to the service of others. Those were strong bonds which were to unite them forever.

## CHAPTER II

The voyage. Arrival at Manilla. Departure for Tonkin. Sufferings of the voyage. Arrival.

In one of his letters, the Bl. Mathieu gives this short account of his journey: "We embarked, 27 Religious, from Cadiz in the fleet commanded by the Marquis Mari; it was the 12th of August. At the beginning of November we arrived safely at the port of Vera Cruz. From there we went up by land to Mexico where we dwelt more than three months at the Hospice of St. Hyacinth. In March, 1730, we went down to Acapulco on the Pacific where we embarked at the beginning of April. This voyage was rather painful. Usually it lasts only four months, but contrary winds lengthened it to more than six. At last thanks to God, we arrived at Manilla in October and soon afterwards we were scattered in all directions."

The voyage which to-day steam has made relatively so short and easy was then hopelessly long and often full of perils. The Religious setting out for the Philippines installed themselves on board as best they could and transformed their boat into a floating convent where they performed all their spiritual exercises in common; faithful observers of

their constitutions which "order whether traveling or in a convent to be always occupied in reading, meditation, or in writing," they employed their time usefully. They accepted in all patience the thousand inconveniences of the voyage, meditating without doubt the words of the Psalmist: "And it shall be well with them; That they may show that the Lord our God is upright."<sup>1</sup>

Father Mathieu was destined for the mission of Tonkin and while waiting for an opportunity to leave for there he stayed at the University of St. Thomas. It was not until the 13th of February that he was able to start. He had two companions on his journey destined for the same mission, the Fathers Pierre Ponsgrau and Michel Pasajes. A great friend of the Order, the Captain Duterte, took them on board his ship and in order to make their passage as pleasant as possible he overwhelmed them with attention and kindness. The Blessed Mathieu gives the following little account of his journey in a letter written later on from his prison; "Leaving Manilla in February with two Religious it took us a month to reach Batavia, where, not finding any boat setting sail for Tonkin, we had to embark for Canton on a Dutch vessel which at the end of forty days deposited us in that city at the gate of our Hospice of St. Pius V. Towards the

<sup>1</sup> Bene patientes erunt ut annuntient. Ps. 91, v. 14.



end of November we were again on our way, and journeying by sea, by land and by river we ended by arriving on the 18th of January, 1732, at Tonkin, at Tru-Linh, the residence of the Vicar Provincial."

We find some more details in a memoir written at Canton by Father Ponsgrau bearing the date of November 20, 1731, and signed also by our martyr. On their arrival at Batavia their disappointment was great at finding no boat for Tonkin. Captain Duterte recommended them to two of his friends, who in their turn introduced them to two English captains who at first promised to take them to Canton but did not keep their word. "They laughed at us," said the poor Fathers; "we were the victims of their perfidy and we would have preferred a thousand times never to have known them."

They spent a part of these long days of waiting on board of two Portuguese boats where they had the consolation of being able to say Mass and of doing a little work as priests. They engaged a young native as servant who made them spend, as they say, "many bad moments. When he was sent to land for provisions he returned when it suited him. He left us one entire day without food, another time he did not give us any breakfast until four o'clock in the evening."

By dint of waiting and seeking, the disabled



travellers ended by finding a Dutch bark which was about to start for Canton whose captain was an Irish Catholic named Jobi. When the question of the price of the passage was brought up, the son of Erin showed his good heart and his faith by saying that he would not only take no money but he also begged of them to be seated at his table. It was only too great an honor for him to have on board his ship Religious whose friendship, and the gratitude of the Procurator of Canton, would amply recompense him. "However," added the Religious, "having noticed that he was not rich we obliged him to accept a certain sum."

They left Batavia the 11th of July and soon encountered such bad weather that they were in the greatest uneasiness. The bark leaked all over and every two hours night and day they had to pump for a quarter of an hour. A cause of greater anxiety for Father Ponsgrau and Father Liciniana was what happened to their unhappy companion, Father Pasajes. A depression and an extreme melancholy took possession of him which soon degenerated into a mental aberration. "It aroused our compassion and filled us with alarm," they say. "We were obliged to be always at his side for fear of some misfortune. Ah! How thankful we were to God that we had not taken passage on a Chinese bark which we had been on the point of doing! for I truly

do not know, under these conditions, what the Chinese would have done with us."

After having wandered for many days along the coast of Cochin-China, in the midst of islands where a mistake of the pilot had brought them, and where they ran the greatest danger, they finally had a good wind and were able on the 16th of August to enter the river of Canton at Bam-Pou opposite a French factory from where they immediately sent a message to the Dominican Fathers. The Father Manuel Tenorio, Superior, hastened to receive the three new Brothers. He began by sending Fr. Mathieu to the Franciscans to be dressed as a Chinese. It is asked indeed, how they brought Fr. Pasajes from the boat. He had, in fact, declared that he had nothing to do on land and that he refused to disembark. Left alone for a moment he seized a loaded gun and as they took it from him they asked him what he wanted to do with it. "To break some one's head, he replied!" It was only after parleying with him for a long time, with unheard-of efforts and the help of a whole troop of men that they ended in transporting the poor Father to the Hospice of St. Pius V.

The Fr. Ponsgrau and the Fr. Liciniana were not at the end of their troubles. They had to wait three months for an opportunity to leave for Tonkin. The Superior of this mission having learnt of

their arrival at Canton wrote to them that their arrival in Tonkin would be hailed with a joy equal to the need they had of numbers of missionaries. "We are enjoying peace," he said to them to encourage them," and your beginning will be easy. Although it may not be necessary, I am, however, sending you two Catholic Tonkinese who will accompany you and begin to teach you a little of the language of the country."

Towards the end of November, as Fr. Pasajes was still in the same condition, he was left in Canton and his two companions were at last able to leave for Tonkin. It took them 48 days to reach Tru-Linh in the southern province. At last they arrived at their destination. It is easier to imagine than describe their satisfaction and their joy at falling at last into the arms of their Brothers and in treading this distant soil after which they had sighed so long and reached only at the price of dangers and sacrifices that were truly heroic.

### CHAPTER III

Study of the Language. Apostolic Ministry. Persecution. Prudent zeal of the Beatified. His Charity.

The Blessed Liciniana was arriving in fact in Tonkin at a time of comparative peace, but it was only a short time since they had come out of a persecution which had lasted for twelve years and which had made many martyrs and caused much ruin. They gave him the Annamite name of Dau. He was immediately put to work at the study of the Annamite language, which he found "rather hard; but by the grace of God," he writes, "at the end of a few months I was able to begin hearing confessions, and then to preach. It was given to me to learn it almost perfectly."

From the year 1733 he was put at the head of the district of Nam-Thuong, and he administered several others at the same time. Twice a year he visited all the groups of Christians, preaching, confessing, exhorting the tepid to fervor, striving to lead back to the fold the sheep that had wandered and to make some new conquests from infidelity. The life of a zealous missionary in Tonkin is consumed by a multitude of works having for their object the salvation of souls but demanding sometimes great

skill and above all the patience of an angel; here he must bring about a reconciliation, there, protect a Christian against a powerful pagan; elsewhere disentangle some impediments to marriage, give counsel to this one, a reprimand to that one, instruct the children, visit and minister to the sick, etc. We are told that during the ten years of his apostolic life our Blessed gave himself wholly to this laborious ministry, employing the hours of the night, which he could reserve for himself and steal from sleep, for his personal sanctification.

A thing which at this time greatly complicated the life of a missionary was the thousand vexations on the part of the authorities of which the Christians were the object, and a latent persecution made the greatest precautions necessary. "God knows," he writes, "in what anguish I passed those early times because of these continual persecutions; but after having travelled over all our districts, little by little I became less afraid." One can only attribute this effect to Divine Grace.

The twelfth witness of the Apostolic Process tells us that when his duty was in question nothing could stop the Blessed. "We tried sometimes," he says, "to dissuade him from undertaking a very perilous expedition, or to make him put it off; but we gained nothing. He said to us one day, "Why have I come to Tonkin if not to work for the salvation of



souls? Do you think that the fear of falling into the hands of the infidels is going to stop me? The rest of you then are afraid to die and that is why you say these things to me and refuse to go with me!' Sometimes we insisted because the danger was too manifest; then without any dread apprehension he would depart alone to fulfil his pastoral duty."

He never exposed himself rashly; he would take the precautions that prudence suggested, but after having reflected and prayed much he put his confidence in God, believing that he could count on His protection. How many times, in fact, did he not escape, as if by miracle, from the pursuit of his enemies? What success in conversions did he not obtain? In the village of Ké-Baï there lived a famous apostate named Chinh-Nham who had done great harm by his words and his evil example. He inspired terror because he had boasted that if a catechist or a priest entered the village he should not leave it alive. After having prayed and mortified himself, Fr. Mathieu started out alone towards Ké-Baï, he went directly to Chinh-Nham and spoke to him with such kindness and persuasion that he won him. The apostate was converted for good, and the people of the village soon became fervent Christians.

Hardly a year passes even now without unfortunate Tonkin being visited by some epidemic. The



thirty-fourth witness of the Process bids us notice that the Beatified never showed the least hesitation in going promptly to visit those sick of the plague. "One year," he says, "there was a great deal of cholera in my village; the Father came there day and night and in the worst of weather. Being attacked himself by the scourge he confided himself to God and made us bring him without ceasing that he might visit and minister to the sick." The same witness speaks also of his zeal in seeking out drunkards and gamblers and other vicious persons and in exhorting them as a Father, but energetically, to abandon their evil habits, and nearly always, he tells us, his efforts were crowned with success, so great was his influence over every one. "With greater reason he brought back tepid and negligent souls to the ways of piety and fervor."

St. Paul says: "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."<sup>1</sup> In order that he might not fall under this anathema Bl. Fr. Mathieu who was so busy in caring for the simple faithful redoubled his attentions with regard to his companions whom he watched closely and exhorted without ceasing to piety and regularity. The twenty-eighth witness tells us on this subject: "Our Father was adorned with many vir-

<sup>1</sup> 1 to Timothy v-8.

tues. I have seen him abandoned to prayer; during the day he often recited the Rosary and passed long hours of the night in meditation. Very affable and patient with his servants, he taught them the science of salvation and gave them eloquent and pious instructions. The catechists and those who were helping him in his ministry he exhorted to study. He took the trouble to write little sermons and exhortations which they copied and which were of great service to them with the Christians. The zealous Father used to be their master and their guide in spite of the evil moments they gave him. One of the catechists once resolved to abandon his vocation. The Father reasoned and talked with him so kindly that he succeeded in making him overcome his temptation."

Tonkin is full of poor; sometimes after inundations or droughts which are not rare, the misery is so great that it is heart-breaking. This is what is told us of the charity of our Beatified: "The Father was endowed with many virtues and in his compassion for the needy he surpassed the other missionaries, for he gave such alms to the poor that it often happened that he found himself in want." "The Father was very merciful towards the poor; during one year of famine he distributed all that he had to the point of having to buy on credit the rice necessary for his house. He hardly passed a year

without being in debt and having to implore the help of his companions of the mission, and that because he gave to the poor money, rice, clothing and everything that fell under his hands. To the Christians who at the price often of many privations, built or repaired their churches, he gave all that he could. He was liberal even to the pagans that they might be well disposed towards the Christians. The relatives of his pupils and catechists had their part also in his bounty. How many times did he not aid them in paying their debts or their taxes, so much so that at times he found himself more embarrassed than those he was helping.”<sup>1</sup>

During a great dearth he himself begged for rice from the more fortunate and distributed it in small quantities to the poor of Tru-Lao.

“An innumerable multitude,” he says in a letter, “are dead as a result of war, ruin and famine which have reigned everywhere for more than a year. The discontented are killing, stealing and setting fire on all sides so that it seems as if this year they wish to complete the devastation of the Oriental Province. It is feared that the famine will last a long while.”

<sup>1</sup> Apostolic Process. Witnesses 28th, 30th.

## CHAPTER IV

Four Martyrs. Our Beautified often escapes from the Persecutors.

In 1736 the persecution was redoubled. A new attempt of the *Lê* to shake off the yoke of the *Chúa*, which however did not succeed, seems to have exasperated *Chúa Uy-Vuong* who laid the blame upon the innocent Christians. Six Portuguese Jesuits had just landed in Tonkin; he had four of them arrested: Fathers Alvarez, Cratz, d'Abreú and Da Cunha, with two catechists, Marc and Vincent, their guides. The Confessors of the Faith were taken to Hanoi and cast into the prison of the East; Vincent died there after being tortured.

One day a catechist succeeded in stealing close to the captives and falling down at their feet he said: "O Fathers what will you give me for the good news I bring you? The 12th of this month (January, 1737), you will leave this prison, you will go to confess the Faith before men and you will receive the martyrs' crown."

It was the dawn of the great day of eternity suddenly illuminating the darkness of their noisome dungeon. The martyrs prepared themselves for death. The passage at arms which the executioners that day took part in over their heads only increased their hopes. At last the 12th arrived, the condemned

were taken from their prison and led before the tribunal of the Chua to hear their sentence read. It was decapitation; only the catechist Marc was condemned to exile. Dismayed that he could not pluck the martyrs's palm with his masters he besought his judges to grant him this grace. "If the Fathers deserve to die for having preached the Religion of the Ruler of Heaven in this kingdom, I merit it more than they for it is I who have brought them into it.' "

The radiant countenances of the condemned astonished the spectators; a mandarin approaching one of them asked him: "Do you know where they are taking you?" "To death," replied the latter. But the other laughed at him. "That man is a fool: he understands nothing that is said to him; he thinks he is to return to Macao." A little later, thinking better of it he offered the Father some pieces of money to buy fruit.

The four Jesuits were executed in the region of Dong-Mo with two Christians and several other convicts.

If the Bl. Liciniana did not then share the fate of the Jesuits, it was because his hour had not yet come. The 3rd of August of this year, 1737, his confrère François Gil de Federich, with whom he was seven years later to shed his blood, was taken prisoner and carried to Hanoi. If Father Mathieu



Liciniana escaped the ardent quest of his enemies it is because God watched over him and did not will that the Christians should be deprived completely of religious aid.

The witnesses of the Process tell us rather clearly what the life of Fr. Mathieu was during these last years of his ministry. We will cite some of them. "The whole time that Father Dau resided in this kingdom he spent in sanctifying himself and doing good to others. The companions who lived with the Father before my arrival in the house of God have told me a great deal about his good works. Father Dinh, a Tonkinese priest, and the catechists Cau-Nham, Siêu, Thé and Toat have often told me that he was burning with an ardent zeal for the salvation of the Christians, in administering the sacraments to whom he was often exposed to great dangers and several times just escaped being captured. Once in the village of Ké-Bo his persecutors seized his boat; but he had time to escape and to enter the sampan of a Christian fisherman. At Đông-Bang also the fisherman saved him. Once while he was hearing confessions at Ké-Do the satellites entered the house; but he succeeded again in escaping. Father Dinh and the catechists have told me of many similar cases which I have forgotten. When I was accompanying Father Dau I have myself witnessed several such cases. Three times while



he was making his administrations at Ké-On he was obliged to take flight. At Luc-Thuy he lived a long time hidden in the house of Trum-Do, for at that time there was a redoubling of the persecution and they sought after the missionary Fathers with an unheard-of persistence. He was also hidden at Tru-Lao.”<sup>1</sup>

“One Ash Wednesday the Father celebrated Mass and gave Communion to ninety persons whom he had confessed during the night. Towards the end of the Holy Sacrifice some satellites of the mandarins suddenly arrived to take him, but he fled still clothed in the vestments and his chalice in his hand. Another year, hardly were the festivities of Easter over at Ké-On when the emissaries of the mandarin appeared expecting to secure the missionary without trouble; but he had already disappeared, they never could learn how. Finally at Ké-Do while the Father was hearing confessions, the enemy suddenly appeared. He again had time to fly and seek refuge in a fisherman’s boat. The infidels followed him very closely and already were crying loud and joyously as though they had taken him in reality, but the Christians faced them valiantly and during the tumult the Father fled and disappeared.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Apostolic Process, 90th Witness.

<sup>2</sup> Apostolic Process, 23d Witness.

These quotations will suffice to give an idea of the difficulties in the midst of which the missionaries of Tonkin in general and Father Mathieu in particular exercised their apostolate in times of persecution, of the courage and constancy which he showed in the midst of such perils, of the Divine protection which surrounded him as long as the hour was not yet come for him to glorify God by the public confession of the Faith which he preached and by the shedding of his blood.

## CHAPTER V.

Arrest of the Beatified. He is taken to Hanoi. His sufferings in prison. Examination. He preaches Religion to his Judges.

Trinh-Danh or Minh-Vuong succeeded his father Uy-Vuong as *Chua* or Lord, but in reality as true King of Tonkin in 1739. Nine years later he was to abolish the edicts of persecution of his predecessors; but in the meanwhile the molestation of the Christians continued and the mandarins had almost complete liberty to arrest the faithful and the priests; finding in this an excellent means of extorting money they profited by it largely.

It is thus that, on the 29th of November, 1743, betrayed and sold by a Judas named Dan-Tat-Lat, the Bl. Liciniana was surprised at Luc-Thuy while celebrating Holy Mass very early in the morning. He had just consecrated the Sacred Species when the catechists and Christians present uttered the cry, "The persecutors of Religion!" and fled in every direction. The celebrant ascertaining that in fact the chapel was invaded escaped himself, carrying with him the Sacred Host which he consumed as he fled; but what was not his sorrow at the thought that he had forgotten on the altar the chalice containing

the Precious Blood. It was impossible to retrace his steps for he saw that he was closely pursued by a howling horde. He was soon driven into a corner and brutally used and knocked to the ground. In the first moments these monsters attacked him with such fury that they barely escaped killing him on the spot. They tore out his beard and his hair with such violence and struck him in every part of his body with such barbarity that they would have torn him to pieces had it not been for the intervention of a commander who removed the aggressors; but the poor Father had received a brutal blow on the head which had stunned him and a thrust in his side from a lance which had almost made him lose consciousness. He seemed to be at the point of death.

The soldiery stripped him not only of his sacerdotal ornaments but even of his own clothes, which his executioners divided among them, leaving him nothing but a miserable pair of drawers; they then bound him like a malefactor and led him outside of the village where he remained until evening while the soldiers pillaged. At nightfall he was taken on board a boat with his faithful catechist, Ignace Qui, in chains like himself. The satellites had taken and bound two other catechists named Siên and Dan, but these had succeeded in breaking their bonds and escaping.

The Ven. prisoner and his catechist were taken to Vi-Hoan, residence of the mandarin Lé-Phong. Being presented to this personage in the middle of the night, the latter, without any other form, dryly demanded of the missionary: "What is your name? From what country do you come?" "My name is Mathieu," replied he, "and I am a Spaniard." He immediately ordered his satellites to chain and handcuff them, to put them in prison and to forbid the sentinels to allow any one to approach them. They remained there forty-eight hours without drinking or eating; the third day a stranger gave them a little cooked rice.

The mandarin had them brought back on a boat where by day they had the *cangue* on their necks and by night the *ceps* on their feet; they suffered inexpressibly from all sorts of annoyances and injuries and nameless insults without taking into account that they were fed only to be kept from dying of hunger.

After several days the miserly mandarin had the Christians told that he would release his prisoners if he were given a sufficient sum of money. The people of influence came to confer with him and they agreed upon a sum the equivalent of which would to-day be more than \$600.00. The Christians made every sacrifice in order to succeed and it was presented to the mandarin who accepted

it with marks of great joy, saying to the people that they would soon have every satisfaction. But they waited in vain, the mandarin in bad faith refused to release the prisoners. When this abominable conduct was known later at the Capital he was severely rebuked.<sup>1</sup>

As early as this the Christians had penetrated into every part of Tonkin. They were at Court as we see, and there were numbers of them also in the army, often unknown to their commanders. One night the sentinel approaching the Father said: "I am a Christian, I am going to break your ceps and chains and you shall escape; do not worry about me; I take the responsibility on myself." The Father, moved by the noble sentiments and the generous offer of the soldier, thanked him, but felt that he ought not to accept, and counselled his catechist to imitate him if the same proposition were made to him.

The last night he spent on the boat Father Mathieu believed that he was already touching the martyr's palm. A Christian, believing a false rumor which had spread among the people, had said to him: "Prepare yourself, Father, for to-morrow the mandarin is going to have you beheaded." All night the Father and the catechist prepared themselves; but the news was false. The morning came and

<sup>1</sup> Apost, Proces., 90 Witness.



they learnt that instead of going to their death they were to begin their journey by land to Hanoï, the capital.

They arrived there December 18th, according to the testimony of the holy martyr, after having suffered horribly during this long calvary, for they were brutally treated all the time, and in the villages where they stopped the prisoners were the object of insults and evil treatments without number. They entered Hanoï as malefactors or robbers. They were left for several hours at the door of the Supreme Council and during this time the unbelieving and curious people gathered around them mocking them and amusing themselves at the expense of the poor missionaries. The catechist Ignace who was present, gave evidence later as follows: "Sufferings beyond measure were caused Father Dau by the infidels, the followers of the mandarins, the eunuchs and the servants of the King and the magistrates; they savagely tore out his beard and his hair; they passed their hands over his face and touched him all over his body, to see, they said, whether he felt and was made like the Tonkinese. Besides this they made little crosses of bamboo and threw them at him contemptuously. He gathered them up and kissed them and undid them, suffering it all with patience and great compassion for this people. Seeing which and not being any

longer able to bear this impertinence and these indignities, I could not keep from addressing these words to them: "Wretches, what are you doing there? What indecency on your part! How unworthy of you to scoff at the Father and to give yourselves up to this sport because you see him meek and humble."

At last Fr. Mathieu and his catechist were brought into the great hall of the Tribunal where Le-Phuong handed over his prisoners to the authorities of the capital. This one question was put to the missionary by one of the grand mandarins: "Art thou a Master of the law of God?" The former having answered in the affirmative he was entrusted to the Governor of Hanoï and to another grand mandarin named Nha-Ca-Kuong, "who put us in prison," writes the Father, "and loaded us with very heavy chains." What the servant of God endured in this gaol is unheard of. "At the commencement," he says, "they treated me as a valiant soldier who can bear anything, but I was so feeble, so weak! For forty days I remained riveted to the 'ceps.'" According to the documents of the Process it seems that these cruel Tonkinese tortured him with every kind of torment, blows and injuries. They buffeted and insulted him without ceasing, they put the shackles on him in the most annoying way, and in order to frighten him they threatened him with their arms as if to run him through. He was devoured

by mosquitoes and vermin. He had nothing to cover himself with during the winter and suffered horribly from the cold, and in summer he suffocated in a nauseous and unhealthy atmosphere. And why was all this? Without doubt to satisfy the cruel instincts of the gaolers, but above all to extort money from him as well as from the Christians, who would not fail, thought these infamous speculators, to offer them money to have him treated more humanely.

Great numbers of pagans on learning that a Catholic priest was in prison came often to see him, out of curiosity, and during their long visits the idea of tormenting and vexing him frequently occurred to them. Several times they questioned him about the Religion he had come to teach in Tonkin. Finding there an opportunity of explaining the Gospel he several times preached to them the essential truths of the Faith, insisting upon the absolute necessity for all to embrace it in order to arrive at eternal life. The reasons he brought forward were so convincing and clear and he stated them with such conviction that they ended by listening to him with sympathy. The soldiers, his guardians, even took off his "cangue" that he might speak more easily. What a wonderful thing! This prisoner counted with the malefactors, had transformed his ignoble prison into a conference hall where he expounded to the pagans the most sublime truths of revelation.

Once, after he had been speaking, an important personage approached him and asked with respect: "How many years have you been in this country?" "Twelve years." "Why did you come?" "To preach the true Faith and Religion, for I am a priest." "To whom does your law offer worship?" "To the One, true God, Creator of Heaven and earth." "The King prohibits this law and forbids you to enter his kingdom, why then did you come?" "Because I have a warrant higher than the King's; I have come to teach the Tonkinese to do good and to avoid evil."

We are not told what the result of this conversation was, but it was prolific of ideas which perhaps later brought forth their fruit.

During his imprisonment at Hanoï he was seven times called before the tribunal of the mandarins when he was questioned often about useless things, but also about the Religion he had come to make known. He profited by this to preach the faith of Christ to the mandarins and to expound to them the most solemn teaching. It was the 29th of March, 1744, Holy Saturday, when he was first called before his judges. The following dialogue very soon took place: "How many years have you been in this kingdom?" "Thirteen years." "In what places have you lived?" "In the lower part of the Southern Province where I have taught the law of God to

the natives in many villages, without having any fixed residence." "From what nation or state do you come?" "From Spain."

The judge then showed him several articles stolen from the Father, some sacred vestments, a missal, a breviary, and ivory crucifix, etc., and asked if those things belonged to him. He replied in the affirmative.

The curiosity of the mandarins was awakened: they asked to stop the examination that they might have time to examine these various strange objects. A crucifix above all attracted their attention. "What," said they to the Father, "does it mean, this man with his arms extended on a cross?" The Blessed, profiting by the occasion which was offered said to them: "This image represents Jesus Christ our Lord, Who being True God became Man, without ceasing to be God. He lived, suffered cruelly and died on the cross as He is here represented in order to save us." Raising his voice so that all might hear him well he explained in a manner clear and precise the doctrine of original sin, its gravity and its transmission to all the children of Adam, the powerlessness of human nature to free itself, the infinite goodness of God in coming to rescue it. The Incarnation of the Son of God alone capable of satisfying worthily for the offence against divine Justice. Continuing his discourse he told how the



Miraculous Conception of the Word was accomplished; in a few words he told them of His Life, His Passion and His Death, how He rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven whence He will come again to judge mankind, calling unto Glory those who shall have believed in Him and loved Him and casting into Hell those who shall have refused to recognize and keep His commandments and the laws of reason."

At this point a bonze, fearing without doubt the effect of this preaching, interrupted him by lifting the cross high and protesting. A mandarin told him to stop and to answer what was being asked him. A satanic idea suggested itself. "Do you dare," said he to the Blessed, "to break in pieces that object?" and he indicated the crucifix. "Certainly not," replied the Father, shocked.

One of the judges interrupting handed him his open breviary and asked him to read aloud. The Father complied submissively and read several lines. The mandarin interrupted him and addressing the other judges said to them: "All these teachers of the Law of God are more learned than we, the customs and doctrines of these strange men are admirable, very noble."<sup>1</sup>

This praise of the priest of Jesus Christ seemed untimely to the President who ordered them to take

<sup>1</sup> Apostolic Process, 110th Witness.



the prisoner to a neighboring apartment during the drawing up of the verbal process of the sitting. This work accomplished, he was brought back and they read it to him, asking him if he approved of it. In spite of some inexact expressions, as the main points were true he declared that it was satisfactory.

One of the judges then again addressed these questions to him: "Having lived, as you say, thirteen years in Tonkin how was it possible for you to escape all the persecutions of which you have been the object?" "Because I have always taken great care to hide myself, and in the fulfillment of my ministry I have taken every kind of precaution, entering the villages in the night so that I might more surely not be seen." "Did you not know that the law of the Ruler of Heaven is prohibited?" "I knew it, therefore it was that I taught it in secret." "Are you afraid to die?" "I have no fear of death and I will endure all that the tribunal shall deem it right to impose upon me." "You say you are not afraid to die, why then did you hide yourself to teach the Law of God in secret?" "For the good reason that had I not hidden myself I should no longer have been able to preach."

In his deposition the catechist, Ignace, says that this examination was interrupted by the secretary who cried out: "Enough of vain words; it would be much more useful to force these prisoners, by

torture if necessary, to make known which were the villages infested with Christians and where the missionaries resided.”<sup>1</sup>

Ah! If they could have obtained this result there would have been a good reward in the end, but not seeing as yet the possibility, they asked him the following question: “In your religion what is the prescribed worship and what does it enjoin?” The Father made this the occasion of again explaining his holy Religion. He recited the Apostles’ Creed, the Commandments of God and of the Church, the *Our Father* and then gave some explanations.

The catechist, Ignace Qui, who was present, tells us that one of the mandarins, fearing that they had not understood well, asked him to repeat that prayer of the *Our Father*. The catechist did it first in the mandarin tongue, but they made him repeat it in the popular language so that every one could clearly understand, and they even commanded him to write it down in his prison and bring it to court.

<sup>1</sup> Apostolic Process.

## CHAPTER VI

His occupations in prison. New examination of the Father and his Catechist.

After his first examination the Confessor of the Faith was taken back to prison where they left him for twenty-two days without attending to him. He spent this time in prayer and preparation for death; he frequently exhorted the prisoners, the gaolers and the numerous pagan and Christian visitors who flocked to see him; and he bore with resignation and patience the thousand discomforts of his prison. The Christians had bought permission to go to him and to take him a little food. From them he certainly had some news of his confrère, Father Gil, who was kept in the Eastern prison, and probably they corresponded and mutually encouraged each other.

On April 21st he was cited anew before the Royal Council with his catechist. The audience was not public. The President said to him: "Look at that crucifix on the ground: trample it under foot, or at least consent to have some one else do it." The Father shocked at such a proposition replied with evangelical freedom: "I have come to Tonkin, as I told you, to preach the law of God. This law is

holy and just; it forbids me to offend my God and to trample His Cross under foot or to allow others to do it. These two things are very grave sins. Furthermore, this law tells me I must fly from vice and love virtue and venerate the three Fathers." They interrupted him here to ask him of what Fathers he was speaking. "The first," he said, "is the Supreme God, the second is the King in his kingdom and also the authorities who represent him, the third is for each one of us, his Father, his Mother and his ancestors." The prisoner then explained his reply quite at length. They at last interrupted him by saying: "That is enough."

The catechist was then called and they asked him: "In what villages has your Master taught the law of God? How many Christians are in these villages? How many servants had the Father and who are they?" "As I hesitated to reply and as I did not do it categorically," says Ignace, "I was cruelly struck with many blows of a rattan; but I believe that their principal reason for doing it was to frighten my Master so as to make him declare, through fear, the names of the villages which had shown him hospitality, and the names of the persons whom he had baptized or had had in his service, for the judge suddenly turning towards him, called to him: "Confess, I tell you, what they demand of you or you shall submit to the rattan like Qui and you

shall be struck with the hammer." However, the threat was not put into execution and he was taken into a neighboring apartment. For more than two hours they importuned me with questions. In particular they wanted to know with certainty the names of the Father's servants. As I gave only some synonymous and equivalent names they struck me anew, and recalling the Father they asked of him which were the real names of his servants among all those which I had given. He replied that he knew them only by the name of a Saint which he had given them in baptizing them. "What do you mean by the name of a Saint?" asked one of the mandarins.

While the Father explained what a saint was, the President turning to me said: "You shall be pardoned if you will insult that crucifix." "I cannot," I replied, "without sin, therefore I will not do it." "Who are they whom your religion venerates?" "The three Fathers as the Master has told you." "What are the observances which it prescribes?" "The ten commandments which my Master explained to you, namely . . ." and I recited them again. "Who then nailed This One to the cross?" "The wicked Jews who hated Him because He taught them truth and virtue." "When On-Chinh stirred up a rebellion the name of the Ruler of Heaven was found on the list of rebels; your Master and you, were you there?" "We had fled to the



territory of Nan-Chan for fear of the rebels." "If you were not there, were not other missionaries?" "I knew no other Master save the one that is in prison with me." "The mandarins who seized your Master declare that there are still two or three others." "I do not know, I know only this one." "You are a liar. Did you know to what you exposed yourself if taken?" "To having my head cut off." "In what house did your Master teach Religion?" "The Father went sometimes to one place, sometimes to another, etc." It would be wearisome to repeat all the treacherous and childish questions with which they overwhelmed the poor catechist.

The Father when taken from the prison to the tribunal and from the tribunal to the prison was always accompanied by an officer and a troop of soldiers. Once during the journey the guard advised him to ask the Christians for money with which to redeem himself. The Confessor of the Faith replied: "If money could get for me freedom to preach the true Religion in this Capital I would be happy to obtain it, but only to redeem myself, I shall not ask it."



## CHAPTER VII

Third confession of the Faith before the tribunal. Kingdoms which professed the Christian Religion. Written explanation of the truths and prayers of Christianity. Sentence without effect. Imprisonment for life.

Seven times these worthless judges made Father Mathieu and his disciple undergo endless examinations, questioning them sometimes one before the other, sometimes separately, trying to make them contradict each other or to find in their answers some pretext for condemning them.

Called again before the bar of this tribunal, Father Mathieu had to reply to the following questions: "Do you know Thay-Hoc?" (mentioned by the catechist). "No." "Does not your religion forbid you to lie? How can you say without lying that you do not know the servant whom you had on the boat?" "I know only his baptismal name. I do not know the Tonkinese names of my servants." "Where did you live before being arrested?" "In many places without having any fixed residence." "Is On-Bot a Christian?" "Yes." "From what village are those who were with you on the boat?" "I cannot be the cause of harm to any one." "Where were you when the insurrection broke out?"

"On the boat to flee to Nam-Chên." "Do you use sorcery to convert the Tonkinese to your Religion?" "No. If the infidels embrace the faith which I teach it is because they recognize that it alone is true, right, just and conformed to the dictates of natural reason." "Do many books exist for teaching your Religion?" "They are numberless, written in every language of the earth, and even in Chinese and Annamite characters. And you, great Mandarins, if you were to read these books perhaps you would not persecute the Christian Religion? In Spain every one is Christian. And not only in Spain, but in many other kingdoms, all are Christians." The Tribunal: "We command the Teacher of the law of God to write a list of the Kingdoms and States which follow the Religion of the Ruler of Heaven and to hand it over as soon as possible to the chief guardian of the prison; and you, Ignace, we command to copy all the prayers said by the Christians." As early as the next day the mandarins were supplied. Fr. Mathieu had even added an abridgment of the Christian faith and an explanation of the Sacraments which had not been asked of him.

In a letter of the 20th of September he could himself give testimony that he and his catechist had bravely confessed the Faith before the mandarins: "Although they have several times tried to terrify me by spreading before me all sorts of instruments

of torture I have never had any fear and I have been able to answer boldly all that they asked me. My disciple has been cruelly scourged."

At length, after so much going and coming, after so many examinations, profound reflections, and numberless and grave consultations, the Tribunal drew up the following sentence: "In obedience to the orders of the King we have read and examined the memorial of the General and Grand Mandarin of the Southern Province, Le-Phuong, and of his companion Diêu, in which is given the account of the arrest and delivering up of the Teacher of the Portuguese Law, named Dau as well as of certain articles belonging to him. We certify under our signature and on our responsibility that this Teacher of the Portuguese Law is really called Dau or Mathieu, that from the year Nhan-Ti (1732) until the present he has lived in the territory of Gioa-Thuy, teaching the people things which it was not expedient for them to learn, and seducing the simple folk; knowing which, the mandarins Lé-Phuong and Quan-Diêu sent one named Dao-Tat-Dat to try to discover the residence of the said Teacher. The spy fulfilled his commission perfectly and made known the place where Dau was to be found. Therefore without losing time they sent officers and soldiers who, surrounding the foreigner's house, took possession of his person and all that belonged to him. Thus they captured the

Teacher called Mathieu and his disciple, Nguyễn-Van-Quy, with some books of the Law, some medals, pictures, ivory statues and other objects which the memorial enumerates. Having attentively considered these facts, we decide that the Teacher of the Portuguese Law named Mathieu merits the penalty of death, and that his disciple, Nguyễn-Van-Quy, shall be condemned to the service of the elephants in the royal stables, and that there the vilest and most laborious duties shall be reserved for him because of the greatness of his offence. The ornaments and other religious objects shall be burned. To my Lords Lé-Phuong and Quan-Điêu, for having sent soldiers to arrest the Teacher of the Law, let a reward of seventy bars of silver<sup>1</sup> be granted that they may rejoice in it and be joyful at having rendered such a service to the nation. Such is our sentence which we submit with respect to the examination of the King. Given and signed the 20th day of the 3rd month of the 5th year, 1744, of the reign of Minh-Vuong.”<sup>2</sup>

Neither this sentence nor several others against the servant of God and his disciple went into effect, either because of the revolution which so unsettled things at that time, or for reasons which the Blessed himself gives: “At the end of six months I was

<sup>1</sup> About 6000 francs.

<sup>2</sup> Apostolic Process, page 176.

condemned to perpetual exile in an island of the sea, but this sentence was not approved by the majority of the Council; the mandarins who questioned me condemned me to have my head cut off. My disciple was destined to serve the elephants of the King for the rest of his life. They commanded all my religious objects to be burnt. All approved of this sentence and signed it; the King confirmed it and set his seal to it. At the end of several days, as the country was suffering from a great drought, the King ordered that prayers should be offered to the idols. On this occasion he gave much alms to the poor and to prisoners. He ordered his Council to re-examine the cases of all prisoners and to set at liberty those guilty of light faults. He wished that the penalties even of the greatest criminals should be mitigated. I was of these latter. A member of the Council who did not hate our Religion to so great a degree as the others pleaded in my favor and three times I was condemned to imprisonment for life. My catechist was discharged for a small sum."



## CHAPTER VIII

At the Eastern prison. He is reunited to Gil de Federich.  
His occupations; evidence of witnesses.

The 30th of May, 1744, Fr. Mathieu received the order to leave the prison called On-gia-ca-Cuong and was immediately taken by a troop of armed soldiers to the eastern prison. A great joy awaited him there. In fact he found there his venerable colleague Father François Gil de Federich who had been kept there for nearly seven years. Who can tell us with what effusion these two sons of St. Dominic, prisoners of Christ, embraced each other?

With the money which his superiors and the generous Christians had given him, Fr. Gil had been able to purchase a certain freedom. He had got permission to live in a little house adjoining the prison belonging to Ba-Gao, an old pagan woman whom he had converted. He bought the same favor of the gaolers for his confrère, Fr. Mathieu, who stayed only four days amongst the criminals in this prison. He was able to dwell with his confrère and take part in his spiritual exercises and his ministry. Two witnesses of the Process tell us how they employed their time: "During the months



which Fr. Dau (Mathieu) spent in the Oriental prison with Fr. François Gil, I served him and noticed that the soldiers charged with guarding him were much pleased at having to watch such a noble prisoner, for they had agreed for about 20 francs a month to let him live with his colleague in the house of the old Christian woman Bà-Gao. He was more comfortable in this place; they kept him in chains, however, as a prisoner, even though he was allowed to say Mass every day and to hear confessions and administer the other sacraments to the Christians. He assisted at the marriages of the faithful and baptized a goodly number of children and adults. He ate only once a day. With the money which he received from the faithful he gave much alms to the poor and prisoners. Several times for money he got the sentinels to allow the Christians, who wished to make their confessions, to enter. He taught Latin to three or four young Christians who served him. He exhorted all who approached him to the practice of goodness and virtue, and if any one consulted him on a matter of conscience or of the family he consoled and encouraged them and advised them with prudence as to what they ought to do. The Christians that flocked to him were so numerous that they found it necessary to add a little chamber to make room for them. About a month before his martyrdom I saw the Father busy

arranging the sacred ornaments and other articles for worship; he had got some European books and was reading them. I know that he did many pious works which I cannot remember with accuracy, but as to all that precedes I certify that it is the exact truth.”<sup>1</sup>

Another witness adds: “I had known Fr. Mathieu and had always found him feeble and sickly; in going to the Oriental prison I therefore expected to find him weak and emaciated after so much suffering, privation and misery, but I was agreeably surprised to find him strong and robust and full of energy and enthusiasm for work like the most valiant. It was manifestly an effect of Divine Providence who was watching over him in a visible manner. I saw him say Mass and hear confessions in the little house next door to the prison. I had the happiness of hearing him exhort me to be always a good and virtuous Christian. Seeing him bound like a criminal I began to weep, but he, full of joy, consoled me and begged me earnestly to pray to God that He would allow him to be a martyr, the one thing in the world which he desired. The brave and dear Fr. Mathieu told me confidentially, that when he had to appear before the Royal Tribunal of the grand mandarins Our Lord delivered him

<sup>1</sup> Apostolic Process, 23d Witness, page 116 and 57th Witness, p. 162.

from all fear and gave him such boldness that he confessed the Faith with delight and supported the truths of our holy Religion by many proofs, and he would have given many more if they had not interrupted him.”<sup>1</sup>

The Bl. Liciniana adds several interesting details: “I am here with Fr. François Gil de Federich who sailed from Spain with me in 1729. He was arrested in the same small village that I was, the 3rd of August, 1737. Three times already he has been condemned to death. . . Fifty soldiers guard us, but in return for goodly sums which we give them, they allow us to go out, which enables us to say Holy Mass every day and even to administer the sacraments to the people of Hanoï. On Feast days about one hundred and fifty persons hear our Mass; that is as many as our oratory can hold. Moreover, they allow us to go out secretly into the city where the Christians carry us in a covered hammock to visit and administer to the sick. We can even go half a day-journey, and although many of the pagans and mandarins know it they say nothing. It seems as if God allowed it so that the Christians of the city and the country round, who are more than twelve thousand, should not be completely abandoned. We also have the joy of a good number of conversions.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Apostolic Process, 34th Witness, p. 117.

Letters of Bl. Liciniana.

It seems contradictory that the Tonkinese government of that time should have persecuted the missionaries so unmercifully, should have condemned them to death, and then should have kept them so long a time in prison and even allowed them to perform all the acts of their ministry.

Besides the reasons already given, the following passage from the Process may shed some light on the situation: "Once the two prisoners were ordered to the Palace of a near relative of the King who wished to know the religion; they explained it to him at length and left him a book on Catholic doctrine. He took a great fancy to the Fathers and from that time he made it easy for the Christians to have access to the imprisoned missionaries; he was even glad to learn that many pagans were going to hear them and were being converted."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ordin. Process, p. 162.

## CHAPTER IX

Sentence of death. He is lead to execution and still preaches Religion. His execution.

In relating the life of the Bl. Gil de Federich we have already spoken of the unforeseen incidents which had associated his Brother Mathieu Liciniana with him in his glorious martyrdom; we will not recur to that. Here, however, is a passage of the Process which will throw an interesting light on the Bl. Mathieu's dispositions when he learned that only his confrère was to be executed. The third witness expresses himself thus: "The eve of the execution of the Ven. Père François I went to visit him and found him exuberant with joy and consoling the weeping Christians; on the other hand, I observed that the Ven. Fr. Mathieu was sad even to tears. I heard him say: Alas! sinner that I am I do not deserve the signal favor of dying for the Faith like my dear Brother; but when he goes to his death I shall ask to go with him and in presence of the Judges I shall apostrophize them: "Why," I shall cry, "is my friend to be decapitated and not I? I am a Teacher of the law as he is; if for this reason, then, you are cutting off his head, mine ought also to



fall. If you think it well to pardon me, acquit him too; but I pray you let me share the same fate.”<sup>1</sup>

As soon as the King, out of a kind of caprice or anger, had satisfied the Bl. Mathieu's desires by also condemning him to death, “then,” say the witnesses, “the tears ceased, the complaints and sighs were turned into gladness and rejoicing so extraordinary that Fr. Mathieu's face was instantly transformed, appearing resplendent with joy.”

While they were waiting before the palace, a mandarin advanced towards them, a paper in his hand, and read the following: “The magistrates charged by the King with examining and revising the causes of those condemned by the subordinate judges, respectfully present this decree to the King: Have been unanimously condemned, in the first instance, to decapitation and now are condemned anew: 1st, the foreigner François Gil because he is a Teacher of the Portuguese Law; 2nd, the foreigner Mathieu because he is a Teacher of the Portuguese Law. The penalty of the latter, it is true, had been commuted to life imprisonment, but this sentence has just been changed to that of decapitation. Place for the seal, 10th day of the 12th moon, 5th year of the reign of Minh-Vuong. The

<sup>1</sup> Apostolic Process, 3d Witness, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Apostolic Process, 93d Witness, p. 133 and Ord. Process, 40th Witness, p. 159.

magistrates, Phuong-Hung, Nghia-Hâu, Liêm-Ngu-Luc, and Tru-Hâu have affixed to the edict the seal of the Monarch."

The two venerable Confessors of Christ, the cangue on their necks and strongly bound, were led in procession, in the midst of soldiers and a multitude of pagans and Christians, to the place of execution called Quan-Bac. Eight ordinary criminals and the two missionaries all bound together, walked one after another. These last came third and fourth. "The venerable priests were walking with uncovered heads, and as it was raining the water blinded them, and from time to time they passed their hands over their faces; I followed them very near by all the time and I noticed that they were joyous and were praying. Arrived at the place which they were to water with their blood, they knelt down a moment, then they were led to a place where there was a little grass and each one was offered a piece of matting to sit on. At first the Fathers lay prostrate in prayer and afterwards sat down. During this time I saw some soldiers sinking stakes which stood as high as the shoulders of the seated Fathers. I saw one of the principal mandarins of the Supreme Council approach the two holy prisoners and ask them if they had any favor to solicit; they made a sign that they had none. A goodly number of Christians, weeping, came also to ask their blessing.

The martyrs consoled them and bade them recite the *Credo* all together, in a loud voice when they should see the executioners prepare to behead them.”<sup>1</sup>

Until the last moment of his life the V. Fr. Mathieu was to preach by word of mouth the doctrine which he was going to seal with his blood. Some pagans approached him and one of them said to him: “The King is punishing you justly for having come to his kingdom to teach false and bad doctrines.” “I have come to Tonkin,” replied Fr. Mathieu, “to preach the Law of the Ruler of Heaven, so that the inhabitants of this kingdom might know and understand that He is the true God. I resolved to do it because I knew that most of you did not know the true God, the Lord and Creator of all things and that you did not distinguish between vice and virtue, not troubling yourselves as to what would befall you after this short and miserable life.”

Still another had the audacity to insist: “The King has a horror of your Religion and persecutes it; why, then, are you not afraid to die for it?” “By this death which we are suffering for our faith, my companion and I will obtain eternal glory in Heaven. Our death is a witness and manifestation which we give to the whole world of the truth and holiness of the Faith and the Catholic Religion, as

<sup>1</sup> Ord. Process, 88th Witness.

will be seen clearly at the Day of Judgment. That is why we have no fear of the manner of death they are preparing for us."

It needed the interference of the soldiers to put a stop to the importunate questions of the pagans.

It was towards four o'clock in the evening, the 22nd of January, 1745, that the two servants of God were beheaded. Immediately afterwards, while their souls were ascending to Heaven, Christians and even pagans were contending for the grass and earth dyed with their blood, their chains, their cangues and even for their clothes. They soaked pieces of paper or linen with the blood which flowed from their bodies.

No fear was shown, as was usual, before the bodies of those who had been put to death, for all were convinced that they were true martyrs, put to death because of the doctrine they preached and not for a political or any other motive. Some pagan soldiers were heard to cry out: "Famine is awaiting us and the insurrection which will follow it; and all because of the sin which has just been committed. Why kill these Teachers of Religion? Were they by chance robbers or brigands? We all know well that they were good men and free from all crime."

## CHAPTER X

Burial and Glorification of the Bl. Mathieu. Miracles.

In the life of the Bl. Gil de Federich we have told how the bodies of the glorious martyrs had been redeemed by the Christians and taken by boat to Luc-Thuy where they were first buried in the Mission House where both had been captured, then several days later they were disinterred and buried again in the new church beside it.

We have spoken of the great rejoicing which took place at Rome, in Spain, at Manilla and elsewhere at the news of the triumph won over paganism by the two Sons of St. Dominic. We have made known the various procedures which have finally resulted in 1906 in the solemn beatification of the two Blessed.

We have told of several extraordinary signs or miracles which proved the holiness of the Servants of Christ and the power of their intervention with God. This is what a witness of the Process says: "I go as often as I can to visit the tombs of the Fathers, and I truly believe that through their merits they can obtain for me that I may observe the holy Law of God until my death. Christians come in great numbers to the tombs of the martyred missionaries, a two or three days' journey round about. I



have seen Christians from the missions of the Jesuit Fathers, of the Augustinian Fathers and from the district of the French Fathers, prostrate themselves and pray at the place where these two martyrs, beheaded for the Faith, repose. Many of these pilgrims carry away as a relic a little of the earth gathered from the tombs of the martyrs. Their renown has reached not only the most distant Tonkinese villages, but the infidels themselves are learning to venerate them and to invoke them in their necessities."

The following case among many others, proves that they are not invoked in vain. Joseph Can deposes the following under oath: "The catechist Khiêm has told me," he says, "that one named Chan-Nhue, one of those who arrested Fr. Mathieu, suffered excruciating pain for a long time. After the death of the holy missionary he recommended himself to him and was instantly cured. His wife attributed this cure to the devil, but he had no doubt that he owed this favor to the intercession of the martyr, and in his gratitude he said to him: 'Henceforth I abandon the worship of idols and I wish to follow the Religion which Fr. Mathieu taught, who has delivered me from my infirmities.'"<sup>1</sup> "A pagan, doorkeeper of one of the pagodas, was seriously ill for a long time in spite of all the superstitions and

<sup>1</sup> Summary, pp. 221-22.

remedies which he practiced. A Christian, having compassion on the poor unfortunate, dipped a little piece of linen, soaked with the blood of one of the two martyrs, in some water and gave it to the sick man to drink without telling him then what it was. Immediately he felt better and was soon cured. He was afterwards converted and lived long as a good Christian.”<sup>2</sup>

Blessed Mathieu Alonso Liciniana whom the 'Annamites call *Ong-thanh-Dâu*, and thou Bl. François Gil de Federich whom they name in Tonkin *Ong-thanh-Té*, pray for the conversion of the descendants of those Tonkinese whom you converted, and of whom so great a number are still seated in the shadow of death. Pray for us who in reading your lives have admired your virtues, your courage, your heroism. Obtain for us the graces that we need to fight triumphantly against our passions, against the spirit of the world and our invisible enemies. We hail you, glorious athletes; may we for all eternity sing with you the glories of the King of Martyrs, JESUS CHRIST, to Whom be honor and praise world without end. Amen.

<sup>2</sup> Apostolic Process, 90th Witness.



LIFE OF THE BLESSED HYACINTH  
CASTAGNEDA MARTYR

1743-1773





## CHAPTER I

His birth. Childhood and studies. His vocation. Departure for the missions. His filial piety towards his mother.

Blessed Hyacinth<sup>1</sup> Castagnéda was born on the 13th of January, 1743, in the city of Jativa in the Province of Valencia, Spain, becoming a child of God by baptism the same day. He was the third of the five children of Joseph Castagnéda and of Josepha Maria Puchasons, who brought up their children in a Christian manner—three of whom consecrated themselves to God in the Priesthood or in the religious State. His Father followed the profession of notary.

From his earliest years our future martyr manifested the happiest dispositions, and responded with docility to the care and the teachings of his parents, and of his masters. He loved to imitate in his home, before his parents, and the other children, the ceremonies which he witnessed at the church, saying Mass with gravity before a little altar; he already began to exercise himself in preaching, standing on a bench or on the top of a table. In later years, when our Blessed was on his way to the Philippines, writing to his mother to console her, he spoke to her

<sup>1</sup> Hyacinth was his name in religion. At baptism he received the names of Felix, Thomas, Joachim, Thadeus.

of this circumstance, as if by it, he wished to prove to her the reality of the call of God, even from his earliest years.

He made his studies in Latin rapidly, and astonished his masters by his facility in learning and retaining, also by the penetration of his mind. The modesty and piety of his soul shone forth in his countenance, giving it a beauty, and an air of extraordinary distinction which won the hearts of all who knew him. The memory of this long remained. After his martyrdom the Provincial Chapter of 1777 made mention of these qualities with which our Blessed was endowed.<sup>1</sup>

A venerable Dominican priest, Father Gabriel Ferrandis, who died in odor of sanctity, visiting one day the Castagnéda family, said prophetically to his parents: "Watch over this child, who is destined to give great honor to the Dominican Order." There existed at Jativa a convent of Friar Preachers, and another of the sisters of the Order. Young Castagnéda seems to have known and frequented them, at an early period. While still at college, he addressed a letter to a Dominicaness there, Sister Josepha Aliaga, asking her to intervene for him with Father Ferrandis in order that he might deign to

<sup>1</sup> "Denuntiamus. . . . Hyacinthum. . . . dotibus animi et corporis cumulatam, adeo ut ipsa corporis species simulacrum fuerit mentis, figura probitatis." *Acta capitul. prov.* 2 page, 489.

receive him into his convent. Some days later, Father Ferrandis being in the parlor of the sisters' convent, the letter was given him to read. After a moment of reflection, he said decidedly to Sr. Josepha: "Let the young man continue his studies, and assure him that he will be a Dominican." The entrance of one of his brothers into the Carmelite Order, made him determine to follow the call of God, of which he could no longer have any doubt. With the approbation of his pious mother,<sup>1</sup> he presented himself at the convent of the Dominican Friars in his native city, humbly asking to be clothed in the white livery of the Sons of St. Dominic. As he was very well known, and had acquired a reputation for wisdom and piety, after the requisite formalities, he was joyously received by the Prior and his religious. On the 3rd of December 1756, being yet only in the 14th year of his age, he was clothed in the white habit of the Order, and admitted to begin his novitiate. The time of probation was prolonged more than two years, until January 1759, because the Council of Trent, does not allow young people to bind themselves by the vows of religion before the beginning of their seventeenth year. After the completion of these two years, during which he was occupied only with spiritual exercises, and his advancement in virtue, he was sent to the Convent of

<sup>1</sup> His father had died in 1751.

Orihuéla in order to study the Philosophical and Theological sciences, which were to prepare him for his vocation as a Friar Preacher. He applied himself to this with all his strength, but at the end of two years, in May 1761, an event took place which claimed his life for the foreign missions.

By the order of the Rev. Master General, there was read before the students, a circular from the Delegate of the Province of the Philippine Islands exhorting any young religious, who felt themselves called by God—to give their names, and to enroll themselves in the phalanx of the missionaries who were about to start for the Islands of Oceanica. Brother Hyacinth Castagnéda felt the call from on high, and had the courage to offer himself. He started on Sept. 8th with three companions for Cadiz, the place of reunion and port of embarkation. During this voyage after they passed Grenada he was attacked by a severe inflammation of the gums, so that he could not close his mouth, nor eat, nor sleep, so intense was his suffering. The physician consulted, declared his case grave, and said that he must necessarily interrupt his voyage. Brother Hyacinth, fearing to lose his passage refused decidedly to follow this counsel, and putting all his confidence in God and in our Lady of the Rosary, as he wrote later to his mother, he made the following prayer to our Blessed Mother:—

“You know that through love of your Divine Son I have quitted my mother on earth, and have chosen you for my mother, it is for you then, to fulfill the functions of her whom I have given up. It is certain that if I was in my home, and if my earthly mother had the power, in an instant, she would cure me. You then, being in her place, and being able as you are to do so, you should cure me, if it be for my greater good.” Having prayed in this manner he fell into a profound sleep; this was in the vicinity of Loja. On awakening the pain had disappeared, the inflammation diminished rapidly, and at the end of a short time he was completely cured. So that he added in his letter to his mother:—“Although I have left you I have found another mother, who is no other than the Blessed Virgin Mary; she consoles me greatly, and I have already experienced her mercy.”

Before quitting Orihuela he had written to his mother of the supernatural reasons which had urged him to leave for the foreign missions. “On the feast of our Father St. Augustin I received my nomination for the Indies, and I am on the point of setting out. My desire is to work and suffer for God; if then, I meet with suffering and persecution, I shall have only what I seek. Raise yourself above your maternal affection by supernaturalizing it, and you will feel proud of the honor God does you in taking your son for this glorious enterprise. Perhaps God



destines me to be the instrument of the conversion of many souls, not on account of my merits, but to manifest His omnipotence by making use of a feeble instrument," and some days later on September 29th he wrote to her again: "Remark, my dear Mother, I do not go to the Indies, to seek my conveniences, or for an end I cannot avow, but purely for God, so let come what will—labors, persecutions, tempests, even with the greatest danger to my life, nothing will be able to make me change my resolution, because as I go for God, it is for Him to take care of me. Moreover, all that may happen I shall receive with pleasure, a violent death itself, if it be the Divine Will, and would to God, that He would judge me worthy of the crown of a martyr."

The principal objection that appealed to the mind of Brother Hyacinth when he determined to leave for the Philippine Islands, was evidently the pain he was going to give his dear mother. But the call of God was there. Was it permitted him to hesitate? He did not believe it was. Yet, he knew it was his duty to soften this great pain as much as he could. He did it by frequent and touching letters to her, whom for superior motives, he was obliged to cause so much suffering. He besought his brother Joseph to aid him in this great task.

"With what face," he wrote to him on August 30th, 1761, "could I present myself before the tri-



bunal of God, if He should ask me then, why I had not followed His holy inspirations? Shall I have to answer Him that it was because of the affections of flesh and blood?—We must therefore conform ourselves to the Will of God, and console our mother as far as possible.” Such, were the religious men, as a general rule, who during many centuries, departed from Spain, to incorporate themselves with the Province of the Holy Rosary. No human motive could urge them to it. Navigation by sail across the Atlantic and Pacific was, at that period, long and tedious, and often perilous, it was necessary besides to traverse by land all Mexico, and to wait sometimes, long months for an opportunity to embark. At the Philippines, a torrid, debilitating heat awaited them, and from thence, to penetrate into Tonkin, Japan, or China what voyages full of danger had yet to be undertaken! Once in those missions in the midst of pagans, what privations and miseries would be theirs until the end of their lives, always abridged by fevers, epidemics, or the sword of the executioner. But it was for God, and these men had a right to count on a special grace, on the special help the Lord has promised to his messengers. “Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.”

## CHAPTER II

Embarkation, sea-sickness. In Mexico, tempest, epidemic. Trials of the crossing; shipwreck. Arrival at Manilla. Departure for China. At Fogan, difficulties. The Blessed is made prisoner, is condemned to exile. Arrival at Macao.

Blessed Hyacinth embarked at Cádiz on the Neptune with twenty other religious of his Order, recruited from different convents in Spain. The voyage to Vera Cruz lasted 48 days, during which they suffered so severely from sea-sickness that several times he asked for the last Sacraments, believing his last hour had come.

From Vera Cruz they journeyed by land to Mexico, where they arrived on the 23rd of February, 1762. There they remained nearly a month, following the common life as exactly as if they were in a convent in Spain. On the 19th of March they again set out to cross the eighty leagues that separated them from Acapulco on the Pacific. They had much suffering to endure during this journey, which took them sixteen days. After resting six days they embarked anew on the 11th of April on a boat called the "Rosario."

While they were still in sight of the coasts of America, a furious storm arose, which seemed ready to engulf their boat. In order to lighten his vessel the captain was obliged to throw overboard a great

part of his cargo. When the tempest subsided, a calm of several days succeeded, during which, the pestilence declared itself on board, claiming a good many victims among the sailors and the passengers. Brother Hyacinth was spared, but two of his brothers in religion fell victims to the scourge,—Father Joseph Ruiz and the lay-brother Anthony Tabuas. At last, after days of indescribable anguish the epidemic ceased, and the Rosario pushed by favorable winds, arrived without further incident at the Marianes Islands, about three hundred leagues from Manilla. It seemed as if they never could reach their destination, as they had to battle against such an angry sea, twenty times they were about to perish. The sea-water had corrupted the provisions and they suffered horribly from hunger and thirst. Brother Hyacinth writing to his brother Joseph from Manilla, March 15th, 1764, said: "I do not speak to you of the torments our vessel passed through from the Marianes Islands to the Philippines as it would be impossible and too long to recount them. We suffered the most horrible torments of hunger and thirst. Nothing remained to us, but a little dried meat, and water was distributed to us in small goblets."

Heart-rending news awaited them at the port of Palapac. They learned that an English squadron had taken possession of Manilla, and had given it

up to pillage. The captain fearing to meet an English vessel refused to set sail again, and leaving his ship, tried to save what he could of the remaining part of his cargo. As to the passengers, they started with their slender baggage on their shoulders, for a journey of more than a hundred leagues, across a country without roads, and most difficult to travel. Brother Hyacinth and his companions spent eleven months in this manner traveling from Palapac to Manilla, sometimes by land, sometimes crossing rivers and streams on fragile barques. They journeyed beyond the Province of Albay and the Carmarines, and embarked at the Island of Polilo on the district of Infanta in order to go up as far as Port Balu. From this point, in order to reach Manilla, they were obliged to travel by land the Provinces New-Ecija, Pangasinan, Tarlac, Panpanga and Bulacan.

What they had to suffer during this journey of eleven months is indescribable. Writing to his brother Joseph at the date of March 19th, 1764, our Blessed says :

“It is time, dear Brother, that you learn something of our miseries, not that you may have compassion on me, for this would be to seek an earthly recompense, but that you may see God’s helping hand, His great mercy, and that He is never wanting to those who seek Him with their whole heart. First of all,

the shipwreck that I suffered on November 23rd, 1762: I was at the mercy of the waves during six hours, supported only by two great bamboo canes to which five other religious were also clinging. At half-past three in the morning our vessel struck on a shoal in the Strait of Bernadino. A first inundation of water put it in great peril, but immediately a strong wave came covering it entirely, and sent it to the bottom. We were then tossed about on the waves, until almost nine o'clock in the morning, when we were cast on terra firma.

“Kneeling on the shore we kissed it with devotion, rendering thanks to God and the Blessed Virgin, whom we had invoked with such confidence. Bare-footed and with only a wet shirt on us, we walked a long time, pierced with the cold, along the sandy beach of this isle, hiding ourselves among the tall grass, when at last, we arrived at a village called Laguang, where we found the clothing and nourishment of which we had such great need. It would be too long to tell you all the dangers I have encountered on sea. Four times we stranded on shoals and on reefs. The reason our vessel did not carry us to Manilla was that Admiral Corniz with a squadron of English ships had surprised the city, and taken possession of it October 5th, 1762, after a siege, and bombardment of sixteen days. The capital was sacked, the churches violated, the statues



trampled under foot, the convents pillaged and some destroyed, the suburbs burned, etc. At last, after eleven months of travel across mountains and inundated plains, by impossible paths, finding hardly anything to eat on the way, barefoot, and nearly without clothing, we made our entry into Manilla in June 1763."

When Brother Hyacinth arrived at Manilla, General Anda had already forced the English to leave the city, and the havoc had been repaired; the Dominicans were again in their convent leading their life of devotedness, prayer and study. It was a great happiness for the poor traveler to repose under the shadow of the cloister of St. Dominic, after having wandered for nearly two years by land and sea. During the next two years he had the happiness to follow the observance of conventual life, and the study of theology in order to prepare himself for the grace of the Priesthood. He was ordained priest with dispensation of age, on the 2nd of June, 1765, and a few days later, he learned that he was destined for the mission of China. After the first surprise, which awakened in him sentiments of humility and self-distrust, he wrote to his dear friend Father X. Caro: "I make known to you, that I part for my destination full of joy and contentment, counting only on the grace of obedience."

He left Manilla on the 7th of October, 1765, with



three companions, but did not reach Macao till the 13th of December, kept back by bad weather. To-day, this passage is made in two days; it had taken him sixty-six. If he only had been able to reach his mission according to his ardent desire,—but obstacles which began to accumulate before him, kept him four months at Macao. He made use of the time to learn the Chinese language.

In April 1776, under the guidance of two Chinese Christians Father Hyacinth, and one of his companions, Father Joseph Lavilla, set out secretly, by unfrequented paths and arrived first at the city of Chan-Chen, where they received hospitality at the house of a fervent Christian called Ly, whose two sons were priests. Our travelers took rest for a few days in this friendly house; then continued their way, in a sedan-chair closely screened, fearing always to be discovered by the mandarins, who crossed them on the roads, or in the inns, where they were obliged to spend the night. Nevertheless, at the end of eleven days of anguish and patience, they arrived at the other extremity of the mission at Fogan, the residence of the Vicar Apostolic, Mgr. Pallas of the Friars Preachers.

A violent persecution had desolated this mission fifteen years before, Peter Sanz, and four of his missionaries<sup>1</sup> had been put to death at Fou-Chéou.

<sup>1</sup>They have been beatified in 1903.

From that time, the edicts against religion continuing in vigor, the priests who had outlived it, or who had penetrated into China secretly, were obliged to keep themselves hidden, being scarcely able to fulfil their ministry except at night.

Father Hyacinth was sent to a hiding place to learn the dialect of the country. As he had already studied the characters at Macao, in a short time, he was sufficiently instructed to be able to exercise the holy ministry. At once, he was assigned to Tin-Tao, where he labored zealously, to bring back the number of Christians who had apostatized during the persecution, and to make recruits among the pagans. He merited that his bishop should speak of him as "a man truly apostolic."

A pagan of his district created great difficulties for him. This infidel had sold one of his little daughters at her birth, to the Holy Infancy. The child was dying, but the care she received saved her. When she was beginning to grow up a little the father reclaimed her, or at least a round sum of money; he threatened to denounce Father Hyacinth to the mandarins unless this satisfaction was made. The child was baptized, and having been fairly purchased, Father Hyacinth could not give her up, neither could he give the sum unjustly demanded. To avoid the danger, and the trouble the pagan was about to

cause, he left that region, and went to Lo-Ka, where he found his companion Father Lavilla. He tells in one of his letters:—that he was on the point many times, of being taken by the mandarins, but that he had escaped by the Divine Protection. He was not always equally fortunate. At night-fall July 17th, 1769, he was called upon to administer the Sacraments to a sick person in the city of Mo-yan; he went immediately on a little boat. Father Lavilla being sick, resolved to accompany him, in order to consult a physician. The two Fathers sailed the whole night without accident, but when at break of day, they leaped to shore, they saw themselves surrounded by a crowd of bandits, at the head of whom, was an apostate Christian named Joseph Ga, who brought the two Fathers to his house; his motive being to extort money for their ransom, but being without a farthing and refusing to write to their superiors for money, this Chinese Judas gave them up to the mandarins. The affair of the arrest had already made much noise, and Ga feared to be accused of concealing the missionaries.

At three o'clock in the morning on July 19th, the mandarins with a troop of soldiers took possession of the two missionaries, who, without making resistance, were conducted in chains to Fo-gan. "We were," writes Father Hyacinth, "presented 14 times at different tribunals, and ten mandarins interro-

gated us. Their questions always the same, reduced themselves to this: 'What is your name?—How old are you?—Why did you come to China?—In what houses have you been?' The Vice-Roy and his mandarins were very good to us. If they blasphemed the law of God before the Christians, they did not do so before us. They tried to impute to us crimes of impurity, but not finding any proof, or even false witnesses, they gave up the accusation. The Vice-Roy condemned us to perpetual exile. Our Christians taken with us, were let off with forty strokes of the rattan, and two months of cangue. We left our prison on the 3rd of October and the soldiers conducted us to the nearest mandarin of Macao, who gave us over to the Portuguese at the beginning of December 1769."

Our Blessed was very charitable in saying the Vice-Roy and the mandarins were lenient and kind to them. 'According to another letter this is what they had to endure during the 106 days they passed in the prisons of Moyan, To-gan, and Tic-heu. They were subjected to interminable interrogations, during which, they were obliged to remain on their knees, they were a hundred times the object of mockeries, railleries, and the grossest insults on the part of the mandarins, the satellites, and the common people—who sometimes shook them, pulled their beards, and threw rubbish and dirt at them. They often had to

suffer hunger and thirst. In infected prisons mixed with the worst malefactors, they were loaded with chains, and a heavy cangue, having one foot in the stocks, in such a way that sleep was almost impossible.

Father Hyacinth wrote to his friend Father Caro: "God helps them greatly," without which, they would have died, through all this misery and cruelty. But it was not in China that our Blessed was to win the palm of martyrdom.

### CHAPTER III

Departure for Tonkin. Apostolic Ministry. The Father Superior of the Province of Macao, resolved to send Father H. Castagneda and his companion to Tonkin, where the want of missionaries was as urgent as in China, and where religion was not less persecuted.

The two who had escaped the prisons of Fo-Kien embarked then, at Macao, on the 9th of February, 1770, and arrived at Ke-Bay in Tonkin at the residence of the Vicar Apostolic, Mgr. Hernandez, on the 22nd of the same month. The venerable Bishop received them with open arms, and even with respect, knowing that they had already confessed the Faith in the Chinese prætoriums. Father Hyacinth received the name of "Gia," and after some days of repose, was sent to Tru-Linh to study the language of the country. He learned rapidly, because, from the following month of August, he was placed at the head of the important district of Phu-toi which counted not less than fourteen thousand Christians and seventy churches or chapels. Aided by two native priests, he put himself resolutely to work, in this vast field, into which he had been sent by the Father of the family.

This was, as we have said, a season of persecution, the missionaries were obliged to hide themselves dur-



ing the day, and to fulfil their ministry, principally by night. Father Hyacinth had less than three years before him to labor, before falling finally into the hands of the pagans, and to be conducted anew from prison to prison, until at last, he reached the spot, where it would be given him to win the palm of martyrdom. We might say, that knowing the shortness of the time remaining, he was in haste to gather in his harvest. Notwithstanding his debilitated health and many grievous maladies, he labored as a valiant workman to instruct the multitude of Christians confided to him, forcing himself to gain even the infidels to the cause of his God, baptizing, and confessing indefatigably, often during entire nights, going incessantly from one place to another. Stimulating the native priests, the Tonkinese religious, and the catechists, to help on the divine work. Several times he escaped the mandarins who were pursuing him, only by running with all his might.

"On two occasions," he writes to Father Caro, "I had very disagreeable encounters, and I was on the point of falling into the hands of the infidels. The first time an inferior mandarin took possession of my boat, but the Christians had time to cast me to the bottom of the hole, and to cover me over with boards.

"The infidels looked everywhere, detaining my boat for nearly two hours—but had not the idea to

raise up the planks, under which I was suffocating. At last, tired of the search, they went away, and I got out. Another time, in passing a river, the infidels met me and stopped me, but on my giving them a hundred and twelve "sapecs" which I had about me, they let me go."

During these years of his ministry in Tonkin the witness of the Process tells us that he was filled with a most tender charity for the poor, and that while occupying himself actively with the salvation of his neighbor, he did not neglect his own. He was often seen saying his Rosary, reading books of piety, and meditating for a long time. From his letters we learn, that interior trials were not wanting to him, he was inclined to scruples, which tortured his delicate soul. God permitting it for his humility, and to prepare him for the great glory that was to be his in shedding his blood for the Faith. One day, when he visited Father Savilla, in June 1773, he said to him: "Do you know I dreamt last night, I had been taken prisoner." The event soon proved that it was a warning from heaven.

## CHAPTER IV

The Blessed is arrested. Trials of his prison.

On July 11th, 1773, Father Castagnéda was asked to administer the Sacraments to a sick person in the village of Ke-Hoy. Although suffering himself he went at once. The next morning the Christians who were guiding him in his boat, perceived a bark, which followed them. It was the famous pirate *Le-do*; a furious enemy of Religion. Seeing the danger, the Christians made for the shore, and saved themselves with the Father, by crossing some inundated land in the direction of the village Ke-Gia. Unfortunately, it was entirely pagan, and no one wished to hide the Father. An old woman consented nevertheless, to receive him for fifteen taels. The pirates after having pillaged the Christians' boat, where the ornaments and things necessary for the Mass had been forgotten, pursued them as far as the village of Ke-Gia, and then, set to work to search for Father Hyacinth in every house. The husband of the old woman who had hidden the Father, was absent at the time; on his return, learning what his wife had done he trampled under foot all the rights of hospitality and justice, and went immediately to

*Le-do* to reveal the abode of the Missionary. The pirate lost no time, but at once, took possession of Father Hyacinth, who made no resistance. He threw him brutally on the ground, and aided by his men, bound him and brought him to his village, insulting and outraging him in the most shameful manner.

Weakened by fever and bad treatment, Father Castagnéda fainted, and remained several hours unconscious; when he regained consciousness, he found himself alone, shut up in a room, where the infamous pirate left him for two days without food. At the end of this time, he brought him a little rice cooked in water. God permitted, for the encouragement of this servant, that this food should become a remedy that cured him, and an aliment that restored all his strength. The pirate kept his prisoner quite a long time, hoping the Christians would seek to redeem him, and that he would be able to extort a large ransom. They held some parleys on the matter, but the demands of *Le-do* were so exorbitant, that they could not listen to them. The Vicar Provincial was prepared to make the greatest sacrifices, but Father Castagnéda besought him by letter not to offer more than thirty reaux, three dollars.

Not being able to satisfy his avarice, *Le-do* made known to the Sub-Prefect of Ke-Bic that he had possession of a "*master of the Religion, of the Lord*

*of Heaven,"* and held him at his disposal. The Prefect sent his soldiers at once to imprison him. For twenty days Father Hyacinth remained incarcerated, alone, and left to himself, without any other molestation. On the 5th of August he was taken out, and enclosed in a cage made of bamboo, so narrow, that he could hardly move. In this uncomfortable and humiliating state, he was daily exposed in a yard, to the ardors of the sun and to the rain. The soldiers who guarded him and a great number of people came to see him as if he were a curious beast. The poor Father reflecting no doubt, that the disciple is not above the Master, bore patiently their invectives and insults. He even transformed his miserable cage into a chair of truth preaching to the pagans the lessons of the Gospel. Mocking Literati came to dispute with him, but being confounded, they went away insulting him. A few however had the frankness to acknowledge the beauty and superiority of the Christian doctrine, but when it was suggested to them to draw the necessary conclusions and become Christians, the pusillanimous reply was: "The king forbids it." The Sub-Prefect also entertained the plan of making the Christians ransom their Father at a dear rate. Not receiving any such proposition, and in order to excite their greater compassion, he had him placed in a still narrower cage, and caused him to



endure the most undeserved insults. In particular, he sent his son who led a debauched life that he might offend his ears by horrible blasphemies, and the most ribald words. Mgr. Hernandez writing to the Propaganda affirms that divine chastisement fell on this son of the mandarin, striking terror into the soldiers who were guarding our Blessed. At the very moment he uttered his base and shameless remarks, he fell to the earth as if struck by a thunderbolt, contorting his body in frightful convulsions.

In the midst of his exterior torments, the poor Father was loaded with bitterness and interior anguish. One day, they let him out of his cage for a little while, and he found means of writing to his friend, Father Lavilla, as follows: "Most dear Brother, you have heard of my tribulations, my prison, you know I am shut up in a cage since August 5th, waiting from day to day to be brought to the capital. I give you my confidence before God, as an intimate friend, that my soul has not been wanting in tribulations, aridities, and obscurities; the devil has been trying to disturb the peace of my soul, by all this sadness, darkness and disgust. May God, our Lord be blessed! I have never felt the divine help so much as at this time; because a single act of love which the Lord has caused to spring out of my will, has sufficed to quell the tempest. *Benedictus Deus qui non dedit nos in captionem dentibus eorum.*



—Finally, most dear Brother, I am now full of joy over my lot, and I humbly hope that God will finish His work, which He has begun in me. In order that my sins may not be an obstacle to the Divine Mercy, I beseech you to aid me by your prayers and holy sacrifices to implore the divine clemency, that I may obtain a general pardon for all my faults and all my sins, in order, that my heart being purified, it may become a sacrifice to the Divine Mercy and that all may be for His greater honor, and His greater glory. Amen! Ke-Bic September 16th, 1773—.With my whole heart your humble and little Brother Fr. Hyacinth Castagnéda.”

As no advance was made to the avaricious Sub-Prefect, he ended by sending word to the Christians that he would not give up their missionary unless he received five hundred *ligatures* of sapecs;<sup>1</sup> fearing that it would not be prudent to act publicly in this affair, he made this proposition by word of mouth. “As soon as I have this sum in my hands, I will send the Father to the grand mandarin, escorted by a few soldiers, the Christians being warned will take possession of him on the way, without trouble.” But who could rely on a man so vile and mercenary? The Christians had been so often deceived, that they could not believe it their duty to act.

One day, another cage was brought near that of

<sup>1</sup> Which at that time amounted to about 400 dollars.

our Blessed, similar to his, it contained a prisoner whom he had never seen, but who on giving his name filled him with great joy, it was Father Vincent of Peace, a native Dominican religious, who had just fallen also, into the hands of the persecutors. The pagan who took possession of him at the village of Lu-Do-Cong, was the same miscreant who, the preceding year, had retained Father Hyacinth's boat for two hours, without, however, being able to discover him, lying concealed under the boards. It is easy to imagine the sentiments which filled the souls of these two apostolic men, members of the same religious Order, who had labored in the same missions and were prisoners for the same cause. It was no doubt, at first, mutual compassion at seeing themselves in this undeserved and humiliating condition, but soon, with marks of fraternal affection, they raised themselves above their miserable state, rejoicing to suffer the same tribulations for God—and exhorting each other to render themselves worthy to bear witness to Christ our Saviour. We may truly believe, that Father Hyacinth, whose mind was tormented by scruples, found in the person of his Brother religious, a great solace for his interior sufferings. Henceforth they were not to be separated, together they were in the prisons, together they were transported from city to city, together they appeared before the tribunals, they heard to-

gether the same sentence, and side by side, they gave their lives for the faith of Jesus Christ.

The Sub-Prefect persuaded that he would obtain nothing from the Christians, resolved to send his prisoners to the Grand Mandarin of the capital of the province, hoping that he would receive a recompense of one kind or another. He was disappointed, because the Grand Mandarin received him with great coldness, he refused him even the use of the public prisons for his prisoners. "Put them in a private house," said the Grand Mandarin, "under your surveillance, and your responsibility, and let them out of these cages. I do not wish them to be in chains. Do you think to advance the destruction of the Christian religion by tormenting, or even killing, two of its honorable and virtuous ministers?" Our two prisoners enjoyed then, a comparative liberty, they made use of it to console a good number of Christians who came to see them, and to exhort them to remain faithful to God, despite all persecution. To the crowd of pagans incessantly renewed around them, they preached the necessity of believing in one God, and of becoming Christians. The greater number mocked them, but a few seemed touched and went away pensive.

The impious Sub-Prefect was enraged to behold his two prisoners making use of their position to propagate the Faith, and he opposed them inces-

santly. One day being enraged by the sight of the numbers that gathered around them he cried out angrily: "Do you not know their religion is prohibited by the King? Look at the state in which the masters who teach it are placed; if you become Christians be ready to receive the same punishment." The menaces of the miserable man produced the opposite effect to that which he intended. One of the assistants exasperated by this insolence dared to answer him. "This year we were punished by heaven, because the mandarins persecuted the Christians. We have often remarked that we are punished by famine, pestilence, and other miseries whenever the Masters of religion are taken. The last crop of rice is lost, and we have not yet been able to sow; how can we expect to reap for the tenth month? Other calamities will fall upon us, as has always happened, if a stop is not put to the persecution of Christianity."

## CHAPTER V

The two Blessed are conducted to the Capital, condemned to death and executed.

Receiving no support from the Mandarin of the chief town, the Sub-Prefect resolved to conduct his prisoners to the capital, Ke-Cho, the Hanoï of to-day, and there, personally, present them to the King. In order to produce more effect, and make his entry into the capital in a more imposing manner, he brought with him a great number of soldiers. He had the cages in which he placed his prisoners painted red; on top of each he placed a board on which he had written "*Chief Master of the Portuguese Religion.*" In this most uncomfortable and mortifying position the two Fathers were transported to the capital. The Sub-Prefect marching at the head of the cortège, gave all possible publicity to his entrance into the city, and he stopped at the public square before the Royal Palace. Informed of what was passing, the King gave orders to have the two missionaries put in prison. A few days later, they were taken out, and brought into the presence of a bonze and a disciple of Confucius. It was an old Christian princess who arranged the meeting, desirous to see her son, the prince Sau,



uncle of King Trinh-Do-Vuong, embrace Christianity. She had herself organized this conference in the presence of the royal family. The King's mother, on her side, employed all her fanaticism to bring it to naught. She asked the two religious the most insidious questions, such as the following: "Where do they go after death, who do not belong to your religion?" Father Vincent answered: "They fall into hell." Transported with rage, she sent them back to their cages loaded with chains. Another day the King made them both appear together before him, and he asked Father Castagnéda, "Why did you come into this country?" "I have come," he said, "to teach the law of the true God, in order that the inhabitants of this country may know Him and serve Him." "It would have been much better to preach in your own country." "For many centuries, my Lord, in my country, the king and all his subjects, nobles and plebeians, have practiced it; that is why I was not so necessary in my own country. It was, therefore, more opportune to come to yours to announce the true God who wishes to be known by all men."

"According to this, then, there was not great merit in preaching the law of your God in your own country?" "Those who in my country have charge of souls, are not without merit, but without doubt, it is a nobler thing and of greater merit to abandon



one's country, in order to make known the truth to the nations that are living in error."

The King then ordered to untie the holy martyr, and to bring the vestments taken with him, saying to the Father, "that he would be most happy to see him clothed in these garments again, fulfilling his sacerdotal functions." Father Castagnéda obeyed, and taking in hand his crucifix, he knelt down kissing the feet piously, and reciting in a low voice in the Annamite language the act of contrition, the Creed and the Pater; then seeing before him a statue of the Blessed Virgin, he revered it, and recited the *Salve Regina*. The King interrupted him to ask him the following questions:

"What does the king of your country look like? When he goes out of his palace does he hold a fan in his hand? and do they shade him with a parasol? Does he go in a sedan-chair or on foot? Has he soldiers? What do they call the mandarins down there? In your country do they pay tribute to the king? I have heard that the king of Portugal has a *bath-tub* of crystal, is this true? What are glass-windows, and what is a loadstone?" We do not know what reply our Blessed made to these childish questions.

The two martyrs were sent back to prison happy to have confessed the faith of Jesus Christ before the princes of the earth. The Sub-Prefect fearing

that the process would be prolonged, and seeing that it only brought him weariness, instead of the honors and riches he looked for, bribed the eunuchs and certain mandarins to present the King with some infamous memoirs filled with calumnies against the servants of God. They assured the King that the Christians had often conspired against his authority, and that if he allowed them to become more numerous, they would certainly dethrone him. This reason which he did not even take the trouble to examine, joined to the influence of his mother, who detested Christianity, inclined the King to rigor. He gave orders to the tribunal to judge the prisoners definitely, and if the accusations had foundation to condemn them to death. Four days sufficed to terminate this process, at the end of which they were condemned to decapitation "because they were Masters of the infamous Portuguese law prohibited in the kingdom."

During the day of the 6th it was noised abroad, that on the morrow the two missionaries would be put to death. A last effort was made to ransom them, but it came to nothing.

Father Hyacinth, being informed of the sentence of his condemnation, asked for a priest from the city, who came and heard his confession, but believing himself recognized he dared not go near the cage of Father Vincent, which was at a considerable dis-

tance surrounded by a great number of people. A little later Father Vincent confessed in Latin to Father Hyacinth.

In the evening of this day, the catechists and some notable Christians came together and designated eight young people, who were to use all their efforts to get possession of the bodies of the two confessors of the Faith, after their execution. Two hammocks were prepared to transport them to the river, also two boats, on which they were to be conducted to their mission.

On the 7th of November, shut up in their cages, and loaded with chains, they were brought before the palace of the King, where their sentence was read to them; they listened to it with transports of joy. At last they were touching on the term of their miseries; they were about to give to God the supreme testimony of their love, they saw Him holding out to them this palm of martyrdom that they had so ardently desired.

A Christian woman, Hyacinth Tre, tells in her deposition, that she made her way to Father Castagneda, to see if there was anything she could do for him. "I am very thirsty," he answered. At once, she went to buy two cups of water. On her return a soldier stopped her, menacing her with his sword. "Drink first, yourself," said he. He suspected the woman of an intention to poison the

missionaries. "I drank a little," she said, "and he let me pass." She relates that she found the two Fathers very joyous. The expression of joy that beamed on their countenances up to the very moment of their martyrdom, is mentioned by the greater number of the witnesses. What brought this out all the more vividly, says one of them, was the expression of terror painted on the faces of the two ordinary criminals, who were executed at the same time as our martyrs. The culprits were a father and son, condemned for having forged false titles to property. We have been assured that one of them cursed the martyrs, reproaching them for having been the means of having their execution advanced. Who knows whether the bad thief did not make the same reproach to the Divine Martyr of Calvary? From this spot they were conducted directly to the place of execution, in the midst of a crowd of armed soldiers, and a multitude of Christians and infidels. They were praying fervently.

It was near midday when they arrived at the term of their earthly pilgrimage. They were taken out of their cage, and their chains were broken. After mutually absolving each other, and giving each other rendezvous in the bosom of God, at a sign from the executioner, they divested themselves of their outer garments, giving them away.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Father Hyacinth according to a witness wished to keep his scapular, but was not permitted to do so.

They were attached to the stakes against which they were seated on the ground, their hair was caught up on the top of their heads; an instant after, the Mandarin who presided at the execution, gave the well-known signal, of opening and shutting his fan; immediately, two swords brandished by two soldiers fell at the same moment on the two heads.

That of Father Vincent Liêm rolled on the ground at the first stroke, but that of Blessed Hyacinth was not detached until the third stroke.<sup>2</sup> As is always the case, both Christians and pagans disputed among themselves for the blood of the martyrs, all that had been impregnated with it, and everything that they had used. God was pleased to glorify His witnesses by recompensing the faith of the people with innumerable graces and supernatural favors.

<sup>2</sup>The executioner seized with terror, fled away after he had given the first stroke. The soldiers were obliged to force him to complete his work.



## CHAPTER VI

New edict of persecution the bodies of the Martyrs are transported to Trung-Linh and interred. Identification of the relics. The Beatification.

The calumnious accusations which caused the death of our martyrs were also the occasion of a new edict against the Christian religion—the missionaries were watched and pursued with greater rigor; the churches, seminaries and convents were demolished, and the faithful had much to suffer.

However, by dint of skill, and money, the Christians were enabled to get possession of the bodies and the heads of the two martyrs, of their chains and a part of their clothes. These, they placed on a boat, and transported by night to the entirely Christian village of Trung-Linh. Here assembled eight missionaries, religious of the Order, who identified the holy remains and venerated them in the midst of their tears, as did also a multitude of Christians; they interred them with great respect in the Church, writing on the coffin of Father Castagnéda: "Ong-Cu-Gia—Lord Father Gia" (it will be remembered that this was the Annamite name assumed by Father Hyacinth); and on that of Father Vincent Liêm of Peace—"Ong-Cu-Liêm—



Lord Father Liêm." Twice since that time, the holy remains have been exhumed. The first time in 1818, when the Blessed Delgado conducted the Apostolic Process, and afterwards on November 14th, 1903, when at the approach of the beatification, Mgr. Fernandez, by order from Rome, brought them again to the light of day. He reserved a part for the churches of Tonkin, and sent the others to Rome. When it was understood at Manilla that two Dominicans had shed their blood for the Faith in Tonkin, there was a general enthusiasm among their brethren, and even amidst the population. A solemn *Te Deum* was chanted in thanksgiving in the Church of St. Dominic, at which all the authorities, religious, civil and military, assisted, besides a multitude of people. There were many splendid ceremonies such as solemn Mass, processions, illuminations, etc.

The same thing took place at Rome as in our convents in Spain, but Jativa, the birthplace of Blessed Castagnéda, distinguished itself especially. This people, full of faith, knew not how to express their almost delirious joy, and thanked the Lord Who had bestowed on their city the signal honor of choosing one of her children to fill a place in the choir of martyrs. There, also, in the presence of all the authorities and before all the people, a glorious *Te Deum* was offered in thanksgiving, solemn Mass, and an immense procession across the city,

illuminated and adorned with flags, such as had never been seen before, while the belfries rang out their most joyful chimes.

The aged mother of the martyr assisted at these demonstrations, also his sister surrounded by her four children, and three of his brothers, one of whom was a Canon of the collegiate church and another a Carmelite religious, the third a layman occupying an honorable post in the tribunals of his native city. The cause of our two martyrs, after having been laid aside more than two centuries, for divers reasons, was taken up again towards the end of the nineteenth century and happily terminated.

On the 20th of May, 1906, their solemn beatification was celebrated at St. Peter's in Rome, and their henceforth glorious names were inscribed on the roll of the Blessed.

Splendid feasts were again celebrated in their honor throughout the Christian world, but above all in the missions of Tonkin which they had evangelized and strengthened in the Faith, by shedding their generous blood.

LIFE OF THE BLESSED LIEM OF PEACE.  
MARTYR

1732-1773



## CHAPTER I

Birth of the Blessed. His entrance into the House of God. Departure for Manilla. Admission into the Order. His studies. Departure for Tonkin.

Blessed Vincent Liêm of Peace, of the village of Tra-lu, province of Nam-Dinh, Tonkin, whom the church has placed on her altars, was born in the year 1732 of Christian parents,<sup>1</sup> who brought him up as carefully as they could, until the twelfth year of his age, at which time, they offered him to the house of God. Shortly after his birth, he became so seriously ill, that his mother Monica lost no time in calling in a catechist, who baptized him privately, giving him the name of Vincent.<sup>2</sup>

In the house of God, under the direction of Father Houy, the child naturally docile, made notable progress in piety and study, serving the priest at the altar, like his little companions, and dividing with them, the work of the house, then, fulfilling by turns,

<sup>1</sup> The catechist Paul Chau said in the process: "Father Vincent was son of Anthony Thieu-Dao and of Monica Dao; both were noble because they were decorated with the title Thieu-Khanh. They were cultivators and quite rich, and generous towards the Church.

<sup>2</sup> This appears from documents preserved in the archives of the convent of Manilla, May 29, 1748. His mother and the catechist Joseph Chiêu affirmed it under oath before witnesses.

the duties of the kitchen, and serving the table, or sometimes, accompanying his master, journeying on his pastoral rounds. These duties fulfilled, the remaining time he gave to the study of the Chinese characters under the direction of a master.

Young Vincent must have manifested a special aptitude for virtue and for study, because on the verge of his sixteenth year, he was sent to Manilla to study Latin. Admitted to the college of St. John Latran in this city, he was the edification of his fellow students, and gave entire satisfaction to his masters.

Five years later, at the age of twenty-one he manifested the desire to be, not only, a priest, but also a religious of the Order of St. Dominic. His superiors, after a mature examination, accepted him, and gave him the habit on the 8th of September, 1753. The following year, on the 9th of September, with three other Tonkinese, and one Chinese, he made his solemn profession in the hands of the Prior of Manilla. He studied theology and the ecclesiastical sciences during four years, at the end of which, he was ordained priest, and passed successfully the examination which declared him capable of hearing confessions. On the 3rd of October, 1758, he bade adieu to the convent of Manilla, and embarked for that Tonkin, which he had quitted some ten years before. It was only after seventy-seven days of



difficult navigation, on the 20th of January, 1759, that he set foot on his native shore. He came back to the midst of his compatriots marked with the sacerdotal character, a member of a religious Order, full of zeal and goodwill for the salvation of souls, all the time God would give him life or liberty.

## CHAPTER II

### Fourteen years of Apostolic Ministry.

Blessed Vincent Liêm, exercised his ministry during fourteen years among his countrymen. In his process of beatification we learn only general things in his regard. The particular facts, which would interest us so much to-day, are lost in the night of the past. Let it suffice for us then, to know, that he administered successively the districts of Phu-Tay, of Quât-Lam, of Tru-Lao, of Luc-Thung, of Tru-Linh, Thu-ong, Ké-mêt, etc.

During the fourteen years comprised between 1759 and 1773, the church of Tonkin enjoyed comparative peace. But so uncertain, that the missionaries were obliged to take the greatest precautions. Mgr. Reydellet, Vicar Apostolic of Western Tonkin, wrote in 1769: "Our holy religion under the reign of this new king is sufficiently quiet. The missionaries and Christians enjoy comparative liberty, and can attend to their functions, and exercise them more easily than heretofore. However, the ancient edicts subsist still and are not revoked."

Alas, this very year an unhappy event caused them to be revived. A bonze, found guilty of a considerable crime, was condemned to death by the tribunal

of the king, which prohibited, at the same time, some points of the Buddhist worship: without doubt they were points dangerous to public tranquillity. But in order not to appear to favor the Christians, this prince, timid to excess, thought himself obliged to condemn at the same time, the practice of their religion; he pushed his partiality and cruelty even so far as to decree the penalty of death against all the priests they would be able to seize.

The hunt began. The Mandarins arrested successively several priests. The first was a Jesuit, Father Horta, whom the Christians ransomed at a high price, then some native priests who owed their deliverance to the same arrangements, and generous hearts of the faithful, and far too interested dispositions on the part of the Mandarins.<sup>1</sup>

Father Vincent Liêm, we are told, made constant efforts to sanctify himself, and was full of ardent zeal for the salvation of the souls confided to his care. It is principally, at night, that he was to be seen going from place to place, usually in a small boat manned by a few Christians, visiting the sick, administering the Sacraments, saying Mass in the early morning, after having heard confessions, consoling his flock in their trials, exhorting them to be faithful to God, settling their differences, or reprimanding the tepid and the negligent. During

<sup>1</sup> Parochial bulletin of Hanoi 1903, page 56.

these fourteen years he had the happiness of maintaining and increasing the spirit of faith in a great number of Christians, of reconciling many sinners, gaining to the church a multitude of infidels, helping the needy in great numbers, and performing many good works, that God alone witnessed and for which he is now enjoying a magnificent reward.

The following testimony is given by Joseph Bi, his servant: "For many years," he says, "I assisted Father Liêm, during the time of his ministry among the Christians, from the feast of St. Dominic until Advent, and from Ash Wednesday until Trinity Sunday, it was his custom to continue hearing confessions until near midnight, and on feast days sometimes, until day-break. He preached to the faithful, and to the pagans, exhorting them to observe the holy law of God. If differences arose, among his flock he made it his duty to bring back peace, concord and charity. When he was called upon to attend the sick either in the day or during the night, in the rain or excessive heat he went without delay and without regard to the dangers he might encounter. He instructed his "familiar," obliged them to study, exhorted them to the observance of the rule, and to shun the company of women, etc. Each day I saw him recite his Office; he had great compassion for the poor, and helped them as far as his means would allow—giving them clothing,

money and rice. When the poor Christians were building their chapel, he aided them from his own resources, and begged for them from the rich.

## CHAPTER III

He falls into the hands of the pagans. Sufferings of his captivity.  
His condemnation. Martyrdom. Glorification.

On the first of October, 1773, the vigil of the feast of the most holy Rosary, Father Vincent Liêm left Thanh-Lan to celebrate the feast of the morrow at the vilage of Cu-Duong. He brought with him, to serve him, two children of the house of God. They were Matheu Vi and Joseph Bi. Notwithstanding all the precautions they had taken, they were seen by a spy, who denounced them to a rich pagan, a furious enemy of the Christians; this was the famous Diên-Can, who in the previous year had failed to seize Father Castagnéda.

Enchanted with the occasion of satisfying his hatred for religion, Diên-Can set out that night with a troop of his trusty friends, and surrounded the vilage of Cu-Duong. At dawn of day they attacked the house of the Christian Nhêu-Nhue where Father Vincent had received hospitality. The latter had hardly time to hide the vestments and sacred vessels; before he was able to fly, he was brutally seized by the pagans, who threw him on the ground, yelling like savages—they dragged him by the hair, then bound him tightly, doing the same to his two



companions, dragging them also away, and maltreating them in a most shameful manner. Father Vincent lost a great deal of blood by a wound he received on the head.

They then conducted their victims to the neighboring village, where a market was being held. The people excited against them broke out in insults, casting mud and stones. There was no outrage they did not make them endure. Father Vincent being parched with thirst humbly asked for a little water, which they refused, overwhelming him with reproaches and insults. The disciple of Christ had begun his passion, it was meet he should partake of the torments and affronts of his Master.

In the evening of the same day Diên-Can conducted his prisoners to the village of Dâu-Hoi where they passed a painful night, bound as they were like criminals. The following day he placed Father Vincent in a cage, sent him to the Sub-Prefecture, and presented him to the Mandarin, who already had in his possession Father Castagnéda. As we have already recounted, in the preceding biography, the two missionaries enjoyed mutual consolation, and encouraged each other to suffer for their Divine Master. On the 14th they were transported to Nam-Dinh, the chief town of the province, and four days later, they were on their way to the Capital Ké-cho, the Hanoi of to-day.

We have already told what they had to suffer, and how they valiantly confessed the Faith before the King and his mandarins. During one of these examinations the King addressing himself to Father Vincent said to him:

"This stranger has come into our kingdom to preach a prohibited religion, because he did not know the law forbidding it, but you, who are an Annamite, born in this country, how have you dared to infringe the laws of the kingdom of which you could not be ignorant?"

"My Lord," replied our Blessed, "I am not ignorant of your laws, but a Christian from my tenderest years, the God of heaven, whom I must first obey, has bestowed on me the grace, and the honor of calling me to preach His holy religion; and not only do I believe I have done no wrong in revealing it to my unhappy countrymen who are ignorant of it, but, moreover, I am disposed to continue, and this is my greatest desire."

"*We will see to that,*" replied the King, then turning towards his mandarins, he expressed openly his thought; that, as for the stranger, doubtless he must be decapitated, as to the Annamite, said he, he has been misled and perverted by the stranger, perhaps, it will be sufficient to condemn him to perpetual imprisonment.

Blessed Vincent, hearing these words answered:

"If you condemn my companion, you should also condemn me, because for your prejudiced minds, I am as culpable as he. If you grant me my life, you should show the same indulgence to him, for he is as innocent as I am. I ask that we be treated in the same manner. He is a minister of Jesus Christ, so am I. He has preached the Christian faith, so have I. All that he has done, I also have accomplished. You say that he being but a stranger has disobeyed your laws, but I who belong to the country have been *constrained* to disobey them. He might have been ignorant, but I knew them very well. Instead then, of being less guilty than he, I am more so. If then, you condemn him to be decapitated, do you not see you ought to make me suffer the same punishment?"

The King and his counsellors, pressed by the queen-mother, by the Sub-Prefect, and the calumniating eunuchs, decided to condemn to death the two confessors of the Faith. On the 7th of November they were notified of their sentence and transported to the front of the King's palace, where the decree, that day to be executed, was read to them.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> The witness Paul Khoz, recounts, that during the reading of the decree that condemned them to death he heard a pagan say in a loud voice: "Why does not the Lord of Heaven deliver them, in order that we may believe them." Another resemblance to the King of Martyrs. Two criminals, father and son, were going to be executed at the same time. One of them cursed the missionaries saying: if it were not for them they would not be executed so soon.

two companions of Father Vincent were condemned to serve all their lifetime in the stables of the elephants, unless ransomed by a round sum. The Sub-Prefect was rewarded with lands, a promotion to a higher grade and money. Diên-Can was praised for his zeal, and also received a recompense.

In the midst of the multitudes who surrounded them, our two martyrs confessed to each other in Latin and then absolved each other. They were immediately transported to the place of execution called Dou-mo. There they were taken out of their cages, attached to stakes, and at the signal given by the presiding mandarin, their heads rolled to the ground, while their souls mounted to glory. Their blood was piously gathered by the Christians, and also by the pagans.

The Christians as numerous as ants, says a witness, rushed forward like an avalanche and made a passage for themselves towards the bodies of the martyrs, through the four ranks of soldiers, in spite of the incitement of the mandarins to strike them, and of the blows which they received. "*Impetu intus irruens*," rushing into the middle, says the catechist, Paul Châu, "I seized the head of Father Gia (Castagnéda) but three or four men threw me to the ground, and took it from me by force, then I got possession of that of Father V. Liêm and carried it off."

Ursula Noan deposes, "my daughter Lucy was fortunate enough to get possession of Father Gia's rosary, and a piece of his clothing; she came back to the house all covered with blood." While they were carrying away the heads, the eight young people<sup>1</sup> designated the evening before, succeeded in getting possession of the bodies of the two martyrs. Notwithstanding the blows which were rained upon them, in no time, they were outside the enclosure formed by the soldiers and placed their precious burden in two hammocks, which some other Christians soon brought across an inundated plain, wading in water up to their knees until near the village of Ke-Sat, on the border of the river, a great number of Christians followed them. There, the holy remains were placed on two boats that immediately descended towards the south pushed by the current and intrepid rowers.

Arrived at the Christian settlement of Tru-Linh, the holy bodies were buried in the church in the midst of a great gathering of the faithful who invoked them aloud as their heavenly protectors.

The relics of our Blessed have been twice identified, in 1818 by Mgr. Delgado who conducted the Apostolic Process, and on the 14th of November,

<sup>1</sup> One of these young men has deposed in the Process that having been recognized he was arrested and put in prison for the space of a year, and was obliged to spend a great deal of money to obtain his liberation.



1903, by Mgr. Fernandez. They were solemnly beatified by Pius X on the 20th of May, 1906.

During the following year, there were magnificent triduum celebrated in their honor. Naturally Tonkin outshone all other countries in celebrating these solemn feasts, which were intended to glorify her martyrs. The triduum of Ninh-Cuong, in particular, left an indelible memory with the Annamites who assisted at it. Twenty-nine priests heard confessions all day and all night, and they estimated the number of Communions to have been about 15,000.

The enthusiasm was indescribable, the panegyrics magnificent; the processions in which the martyrs' relics were carried, interminable. At Mass and Vespers special instruments of music lent an additional splendor to the solemnity, also fireworks, etc.

Blessed Vincent Liêm of Peace pray for us; intercede for your countrymen, especially for the great number plunged in the darkness of infidelity. Obtain from the Divine Mercy an abundant effusion of graces for your dear Tonkin, in order that its inhabitants may enter in greater number into the fold of the Good Pastor.











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